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Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: We shall now continue our thematic discussion on the subject of conventional weapons. Today, we have as guest speaker Ambassador François Rivasseau, President-designate of the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

Before we proceed, I should like to remind the First Committee of my intention to adjourn this meeting a bit earlier, in order to accommodate the request made by the Fourth Committee.

I now invite Ambassador Rivasseau to make a statement.

Mr. Rivasseau (Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons): When I first arrived in Geneva, seven years ago, and was first learning about the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), I had one question. Since I have become President-designate, not a single day has gone by when I have not heard that question, which takes the form of something of a joke. People say to me, "You are chairing the Convention on inhumane weapons". But are weapons humane? What are humane weapons? It is difficult to explain, because the CCW is a convention about inhumane weapons. Inhumane weapons were defined by a Mexican ambassador for whom I have great respect as weapons with indiscriminate effects. I am supposed to know whom I am shooting at when I aim at someone. Weapons such as mines are supposed to be indiscriminate in their effects. Weapons having what are called excessive and unnecessary traumatic effects constitute a larger category — those include blinding lasers, incendiary weapons and so on.

I shall now continue in French, using my privilege as a native speaker of French to speak in that language and avail myself of interpretation. But I just wanted to tell the Committee that the Convention on inhumane weapons does not mean that weapons are humane, but that there are weapons that are less or more inhumane than others.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to say at the outset how pleased I am to be here to speak to the First Committee about the CCW. Given that time is short, I would like briefly to speak about two points. I should first like to introduce the Committee to the CCW regime. I shall not describe it in detail, as the Committee can read about it in books. I would simply like to explain why the CCW regime is unique, how it is specific and how it can

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provide creative solutions that can also be pertinent to the other disarmament topics dealt with in the First Committee. I should then like to speak a bit more precisely about the preparatory phase of the upcoming five-year Review Conference, which will take place at Geneva in less than a month.

As regards my first point, I should like to describe the solutions that the CCW regime could provide to meet a number of disarmament problems that we are all too aware of. At the outset, I would like to say that this is a relatively successful regime that has, to a certain degree succeeded in sidestepping the crisis in the area of disarmament to which some have pointed for a number of years. It is the sole disarmament regime to have produced a legally binding treaty — negotiated, signed and ratified — in the last five years. I would even say that, going back even further, among the bodies that can be considered fully multilateral — the CCW among them — one would have to go back to 1993 and the Chemical Weapons Convention to find a similar treaty to have entered into force. In 1996, the CCW produced Amended Protocol II. In 2001, a decision was taken to amend the Convention to make the CCW also applicable to non-State actors. As a result, Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War will enter into force on 12 November 2006.

What has led to this success? First of all, I think it is because the regime straddles the boundary between disarmament and humanitarian rights. That has also been due to the Convention's sharp focus on the humanitarian dimension, similar to the Ottawa Landmine Convention. The Convention also benefits from people's innate sympathy for humanitarian causes. Moreover, every one of us, not as diplomats but as citizens, has an interest in the Convention, for we know that we could be the victims of indiscriminate and inhumane weapons. The principle of proximity therefore prompts us to be more interested in some causes than in others. That redounds to the benefit of this sort of regime. The synergy between disarmament and humanitarian concerns that is on particular display in the CCW is certainly one of the reasons for the Convention's relative success.

The CCW regime has to do with disarmament both because its work itself involves weapons and because its ultimate concrete goal is to establish bans or limits on the use of certain weapons. The regime also has to do with disarmament by virtue of its methods. The regime is based on consensus and operates on the basis of a five-year review process. That reflects the approach in other disarmament fields — the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) being one example — which includes a preparatory process, annual meetings and a five-year review conference.

However, in many respects the regime also entails international humanitarian law. By its very nature, for instance, the CCW is part of international humanitarian law. But it also has to do with international humanitarian law because of the major involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which was at the centre of the Convention's origins. The ICRC's involvement has been constant — from the Convention's origins to its contents and functioning. The Convention's philosophy is also humanitarian in nature, for it aims at reducing the pointless suffering of both civilians and military personnel.

Perhaps another reason for its success is the fact that the CCW regime is not well known. I would say that, in disarmament as in other fields, to live happily one should live in hiding. In that way one can avoid ideological polarization. This is not a subject that is controversial in the capitals of large developed and underdeveloped countries. Journalists' passions are rarely inflamed for or against it. Lastly — perhaps to the Committee's disappointment — I would say that, as a testament to moderation, we sometimes do our best work when we are least involved. Its success may also be due to the fact that it is little known by virtue — with all due respect — of being based at Geneva and because of the fact that it deals with technical issues.

It may also be that the extremely long and unreadable title of the Convention contributes to its obscurity. That is why we speak of inhumane arms, in order to be understood. There is perhaps one final reason: for 10 years, the regime has been obscured — and for good reason — by the great success of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines. The Ottawa Convention, as we all know, was born from the outcome — considered insufficient by many — of the negotiations on the Amended Protocol II to the CCW. Amended Protocol II did not establish a total ban on anti-personnel mines, but the Ottawa Convention did. The Ottawa Convention was suddenly in the spotlight, which might be an explanation as well for the relative obscurity of the CCW process.

The CCW regime is not well known and perhaps it is better that way. But it is a regime that, as specialists, the Committee should become familiar with as it may sometimes offer ideas and solutions. It should be better studied, in particular because it is an authentically multilateral regime that represents all regions of the world. Many countries with serious security concerns, such as France, India, Pakistan, Cuba, South Africa and the Republic of Korea, among others, are members of the CCW regime. Thus, its results are for universal bodies to consider.

What are the technical recipes of the CCW? The French like that — the language of the chef in the kitchen. What are the useful recipes that I might offer? First, it is a regime that does not necessarily become polarized on the question of its mandate. Substantive negotiations are conducted without ad hoc committees, without special coordinators with a negotiating mandate, without even a negotiating mandate in some cases. If we think of the time lost arguing over a comma on the Shannon Mandate of the fissile material cut-off treaty, or how for 10 years now we have been deadlocked in the Conference on Disarmament on the issue of whether there should be an ad hoc committee or a special coordinator on nuclear weapons in outer space, or other subjects — from that point of view the CCW Convention appears as a breath of fresh air.

We negotiated Protocol V, we concluded it, and it was signed, ratified and entered into force as legally binding, without the shadow of a mandate. There was only a basic and extremely general mandate to study; at some point, States simply realized that it was in their interest to negotiate and complete a protocol. At that time, they did not waste time considering a mandate but went directly into negotiations. That is reassuring, because when we do not subscribe to a mandate or ad hoc committee, States become involved in negotiations with their hands free. They are not tied by the opinions of the International Court of Justice, mandates to negotiate with deadlines and such things. States are free, as in the case of the CCW, to do as they wish. Then they concentrate on substance.

In the conference room I see my friend and accomplice, the coordinator from Brazil on anti-personnel mines. He has no negotiating mandate. Nor did his predecessor have one. At the same time, we may be coming to a time when all States members of the CCW will recognize and will be firmly committed to negotiations. I hope that will be the case one month from now. If we ask the question at that time about a negotiating mandate, I guarantee that we will not spend a lot of time on that issue — if we even get to that question. Because that is not what is essential — what is essential is the substance.

Another point that might be of interest is that the regime is open-ended. There is a framework convention and, according to the needs of the moment, there is the possibility of negotiation or reflection on the subject of the day. For example, today a certain number of States and non-governmental organizations are telling us that cluster munitions is the subject of the day. There is no consensus until now on negotiating that. However, we can still discuss it and the CCW is the only forum that is able to offer a place for such dialogue — in terms of disarmament, universality and consensus. Whereas, you know that in the last week we discussed that topic at length.

The CCW also offers a thermometer and a cooking pot. A specific and interesting rule within the CCW forum is that when there are 18 countries that wish to negotiate or discuss a subject they can go to the United Nations Secretary-General to ask him to convene a meeting or negotiating session on the topic. Concerning cluster munitions, at the moment we are not 18, but six. But if one day there are more, then we might have a discussion or negotiation. That being said, the negotiation must occur based on consensus. Therefore, the formula that includes calling for the holding of a meeting is only used when it is possible to have a consensus, otherwise it is irresponsible and a waste of resources. But sometimes it allows us to advance in a more flexible manner, rather than a system where there must be agreement on each element of procedure.

Finally, concerning that issue, the CCW leaves room for the system of the majority in terms of procedural rules. In general, it is of no interest to use it as we know it will not go anywhere. But it does protect us from sterile procedural discussions. There are very few procedural discussions in the CCW, because we know that if it gets out of hand, we can get them resolved through a vote. That is another interesting feature of the CCW regime.

In order to avoid having to vote on numerous subjects, we have the system of a five-year review. At every five-year conference, we try to establish a programme of work for the next five years that will

allow us to avoid having to resort to the 18 State procedure to ask for a convention. However, that procedure does exist as a safety net.

Now that I have spoken of the advantages of the CCW, I must tell you that it is a regime that has serious flaws. The major technical flaw — that should not be imitated — is that it is too variable in its geometry, as well as the great legal complexity that it entails.

In total, we have eight different legal regimes. One can become a member of the CCW by acceding to just the Convention and two of its Protocols — for example, those on laser weapons and incendiary devices. So one can become a member of the CCW without having had anything to do with the Protocols on explosive remnants of war or mines. Therefore, we have eight regimes: the Convention, five Protocols, one amended Protocol — Amended Protocol II — and the 2001 decision.

Naturally, many of the 100 States parties to the CCW have not acceded to the same things, so States are not at exactly the same level of engagement. There is a good aspect to that: everyone should immediately accede to the CCW, because, in my view, one can do that while being mindful of one's security problems. Moreover, my mission has pleaded for universalization of the Conference. I was mandated to do that during the present session of the General Assembly and to submit a report at the end of the session, next summer. So I will begin right now by saying to members: look at this regime and consider it. It is a useful regime that can yield results without compelling you to compromise your fundamental security interests in an area where you really cannot do that.

But the disadvantage is that it is a complex regime. We need to work on its universalization — this is a major priority — to produce virtually the same result for everyone. That is one of this year's most important objectives. During the preparatory process, we have already seen a comprehensive agreement on universalizing the CCW.

That is what I wanted to say about the regime. I would like to use my remaining five minutes to briefly describe how we envisage a review conference in practice.

First, I would say that we have had a useful and positive preparatory process. For example, compared with the process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we really did a bit better in the preparatory process, because we were able to discuss substance; we agree on the entire procedure and on most of the substance. We will come to the Review Conference — and all those who prepare review conferences know what this is about — with an agenda, a programme of work, the agendas of the agreed subsidiary committees and their programmes of work, the rules of procedure and a complete Bureau, in addition to an ambitious action plan on the agreed universalization. Of course, all of that has been recommended. There has been no final decision; that is up to the Convention. But the States parties have agreed to make a recommendation.

We have already reached agreement on a draft declaration concerning the entry into force of Protocol V and a draft decision on a co-sponsorship programme that would make it possible to finance a number of operations aimed essentially at universalizing the Convention, such as what is occurring with the Ottawa Convention. We have also agreed on a draft outcome declaration, with the entire review process already nearly over. So, as members can see, we are well under way with the Review Conference programme, which proves that the review process was positive. I believe that it is also a useful example to think about.

So what is left for us to do? We still have to do the most important thing: agree on three subjects for the Review Conference and keep the regime alive after the Conference. Out of the three subjects that we will address at the Review Conference, we have a pretty clear vision of where we are going on two. The first is to develop a mechanism to ensure compliance with the Convention. We have an agreement that is nearly complete, on a mechanism to ensure compliance. It will probably be a choice between an amended mechanism and a decision mechanism. But it seems that we are leaning towards a decision mechanism — that is, a mechanism providing for a political decision to strengthen the compliance provisions.

As members know, this subject — compliance with norms and treaties — is not always a matter of consensus. If I hope to achieve a consensus in November, it is because we are trying to work in a cooperative manner and to develop a system of cooperation and assistance aimed at compliance, rather than a legally binding system. But it is an ambitious system that will include the establishment of a pool of

experts and the development of a consultation mechanism.

So will we be in a position to conclude? Will we achieve a consensus on this? I do not know yet. We are well on the way, but we are in the hands of the States parties, and it is impossible to predict where we will end up.

A second issue is the explosive remnants of war. On that issue, we have already concluded Protocol V. So we will be able to present a protocol to member States, the international community and public opinion. The question is whether we will have to continue to work on this issue, and if yes, how.

In that context, some States want us to work on submunitions. A more significant number of States want us to continue some technical work that has already begun within the framework of the current mandate, which makes it possible to try to identify the problems and questions that we will not have resolved through Protocol V from a humanitarian perspective, particularly on submunitions. And then it is also possible that we will decide that that is not enough to justify a particular Conference task and that the work on that issue should stop.

The CCW is not, in fact, a regime of ongoing negotiations. That is also one of its assets. If we believe at any given time that there are no reasonable prospects for achieving something within a reasonable time frame that makes sense to the international community, we stop, we put the project on hold, we pick it up later; it is not a problem. Meanwhile, we can focus on something else, so as not to become mired in certain issues.

So I do not really know where we will be going, especially since the views of States change on this. And here again, we are in the hands of States. The views of States change. As you know, there are public opinion campaigns under way in a number of countries. Therefore, I do not know where we will end up here either. This is also an important issue.

But the issue that will require the most work from us, at least at the technical level, is that of mines other than anti-personnel mines — that is, anti-vehicle mines, to speak clearly and simply. These mines have been the subject of an effort by the CCW community for four years now. A Finnish coordinator, Ambassador Reimaa, submitted a draft protocol last year. Since then, we have been trying — thanks to the Ambassador of Brazil, who is more particularly in charge of this project, this "mission impossible", as they would say in the movies — to conclude a protocol that is both demanding and useful from the humanitarian perspective and that commands a consensus on a particularly difficult topic. I do not know where we will end up here either.

However, on each of these three issues, the Bureau and its members are resolved to work as much as possible and tirelessly until the last minute. That is all that we can promise. After that, will we or will we not be able to deliver the goods? That will depend on the States parties; we are there to serve them — those who want to move forward, as well as those who cannot move forward at a particular time.

One last point: we must think about the future of the regime. What are we going to do after November? There will be life after the Review Conference. That was true in the case of the review conferences on small arms and on the NPT; it will also be true for the CCW. I still do not know — will new subjects emerge? A journalist recently asked me about an issue that the Conference has never examined. Will the older topics that one or two countries have proposed — blinding lasers, for example — be a subject for discussion in the future? Will we step up the work on one of the topics dealt with at the Review Conference because we were not able to finish? Are we going to take a break?

The only thing that has been decided — or, rather, recommended — is that a meeting of the States parties will take place next year. And we are supposed to hold the next review conference. But as can be seen, the framework is still quite empty and we have to fill it.

In conclusion, I would like to say that work in the context of the CCW is very interesting because the exchange is more direct, more frank and less ideological than in other forums.

The Chairperson: I thank Ambassador Rivasseau for his inspiring statement.

It is now my intention to provide the Committee with the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our panellist by having an informal question and answer session. I will suspend the meeting now in order to continue our discussion in an informal mode.

The meeting was suspended at 3.45 p.m. and resumed at 3.55 p.m.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am making this statement on behalf of the Central American Integration System (SICA), which includes Belize, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, with Mexico as an associate.

Every year, anti-personnel landmines cause the loss of human life, livestock and domestic animals, and prevent fertile land from being used for agriculture. This has a direct impact on the local economy of extensive regions in developing countries. That is why clearing mines in any part of the world is vital to the populations that find themselves close to the places where these mines were planted.

During the conflicts that took place in the Central American region in the 1980s and in early 1990s, thousands of landmines were sown, affecting not only the countries that were experiencing violence, but also countries that did not have internal armed conflicts, such as Honduras and Costa Rica. For this reason, in 1991 our countries requested the assistance of the Organization of American States (OAS) to begin demining operations. The Organization responded with the Assistance Programme for Demining in Central America, funded by donor countries.

This programme is today known as Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines (AICMA) and has been expanded to other countries in South America. This programme supports mine clearance, offers support to educate the population on risks, grants assistance to victims, works on the socio-economic reintegration of previously mined areas, promotes the establishment of a database and supports the efforts to prohibit the production, use, sale, transfer and stockpiling of landmines. The OAS has managed to increase the demining ability of the affected countries, channelling international funds, equipment and training personnel to the affected regions. Spain was and is an important contributor to this process, assistance for which I express my gratitude on behalf of these countries.

Mexico, also committed to the stability in the Central American region, has supported demining efforts in the region and, in particular, has provided assistance and rehabilitation to the victims. Likewise, the Dominican Republic, a country that has never been affected by the scourge of landmines, has always expressed its solidarity with the countries of the region that have suffered from the effects of this problem, supporting cooperation and assistance in demining matters.

The will of our country to eradicate these deadly devices from our region and from the rest of the world has been manifested in many ways. One of them was our ratification, along with all SICA countries, of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We took part in meetings of States members of this Convention where we shared our experiences and have also participated in and hosted other international meetings where we raised this issue. Likewise, we have provided assistance to mine clearance operations in other parts of the world, thus reciprocating, at least in part, the cooperation that the international community has afforded us in demining our territories. We should point out that none of our countries has been or is a producer of anti-personnel landmines, and we have never exported these devices to other States.

I refer now to some of the achievements in the countries which I represent and which have been affected by this scourge. The first States that were involved in the formerly named Assistance Programme for Demining in Central America were Costa Rica and Honduras, countries which, though they did not have armed conflict on their territories, were affected, as I said earlier, by anti-personnel mines that were laid in their border areas. Costa Rica was declared a mine-free territory in December 2002, and Honduras in October 2004. For its part, Belize was declared a mine-free area in January of that year and introduced legislation to implement the Ottawa Convention. At the end of 2005, Guatemala declared that it had completely cleared all known areas of anti-personnel landmines. However, it decided to maintain a small demining unit in order to provide a timely and swift response to future reports by the population on the location of possible mines or explosive devices.

El Salvador faced a serious problem in parts of its territory resulting from mines and explosive devices planted during the armed conflict that took place between 1980 and 1992. It was estimated at the end of the war that there were 20,000 landmines in 425 mined camps that covered an area of 436 square kilometres.

Today, El Salvador has also been declared a mine-free territory.

The problem of landmines in Nicaragua was a result of the armed conflict which plagued its inhabitants from 1981 to 1990. In the early 1990s, more than half a million Nicaraguans lived within five kilometres of mined areas, which contained more than 135,000 registered landmines. A significant number of mines uncovered in recent years, and delays in operations due to difficult access to the territory where they are located, has led Nicaragua to defer on several occasions the estimated date to complete the demining of its entire territory. It is currently projected that the demining operations could conclude in 2007.

As members of the First Committee know, 4 April of each year has been proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 60/97 as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. Within this framework, we are pleased to report that the seventh Conference of Defence Ministers of the Americas, which took place in Managua from 1 to 5 October 2006, agreed on the establishment of an international humanitarian mine removal training centre, which will be located in Nicaragua, a country which has the facilities, equipment and the necessary human resources. The centre will have an initial budget of $4 million, which could increase with contributions from donor countries. With this centre, the Nicaraguan authorities hope to show their gratitude to the international community for the assistance Nicaragua received and continues to receive in the demining of its territory.

To conclude, our countries believe that demining operations are essential for our efforts to strengthen peace in our region. We are resolutely in favour of making the American continent a mine-free zone and will continue working to do so, under the leadership of the United Nations, in order to help achieve the objectives of the international community in this area.

Ms. Kagosha (Kenya): The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons continues to be the cause of millions of deaths in the world today, particularly in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. Development and security are further impeded by the irresponsible use of small arms and light weapons.

Kenya has exerted great efforts in establishing a comprehensive and sustainable regime to prevent, reduce and combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. These include developing a national action plan, drafting a national policy, setting up provincial and district task forces, destroying illicit arms, strengthening the national coordinating structure and ensuring participation of civil society in all processes.

At the regional level, Kenya, together with 10 other countries, is signatory to the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. Kenya also signed a joint disarmament initiative with Uganda in 2005 to facilitate disarmament of the pastoral communities along our common border.

Kenya's efforts in seeking sustainable solutions to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa are never-ending. These include the successful negotiation and consequent formation of a Transitional National Government in Somalia and the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan.

Despite these efforts, Kenya continues to bear the brunt of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Currently, we are faced with the great challenge of a large influx of refugees from Somalia, which has been aggravated by the irresponsible use of small arms and light weapons.

We therefore acknowledge the urgent need for an international code to control arms trading, as arms transfers transcend States and regions. Such an agreement will ensure that standards for arms control are applied universally, thereby leading to the safety of our peoples, international peace and security, respect for the rule of law and sustainable development for all.

Kenya is greatly encouraged by the wide support for the draft resolution entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms" (A/C.1/61/L.55), and we strongly urge all States to support this initiative.

Mr. Mine (Japan): The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by consensus in 2001, is a comprehensive normative guideline to be followed by the entire international community. In the five years since its adoption, the Programme of Action has demonstrated

its effectiveness, and we have much to be proud of, with measurable progress in tackling this problem at the national, regional and global levels. Furthermore, civil society has taken significant actions to supplement governmental activities.

Let me cite some major achievements in the implementation of the Programme of Action. First, an International Instrument on marking and tracing has been adopted. This Instrument, negotiated and concluded among all Member States under the Programme of Action in order to address a specific issue in the field of small arms and light weapons, is a highly significant milestone in our efforts. Regardless of whether the Instrument is legally binding or politically binding, what is important for the international community is to faithfully implement all the measures agreed in the Instrument, which is required for a successful conclusion to our efforts to tackle the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Secondly, the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering begins its deliberations in November, after this Committee's meetings. This is also a very important issue, which is being taken up in the follow-up section of the Programme of Action, alongside the tracing issue. Major outstanding matters — for example, those related to the scope, licensing problem and extraterritorial jurisdiction — will be discussed in the course of the Group's deliberations.

Thirdly, the growing rate at which national reports are being submitted, as well as the increase in the number of national points of contact, deserves special mention. Coordination among the internal agencies concerned is indispensable if we are to effectively address the problem of small arms and light weapons. Furthermore, international cooperation through information-sharing among countries is also essential if the concerted efforts of the international community in this area are to succeed. In the light of that, Japan continues to encourage those countries which have not yet done so to submit a national report and to establish or designate a national point of contact.

Fourthly, the growing awareness of the need to address demand factors in tackling the problem of small arms and light weapons is also an important aspect to be considered. The Programme of Action itself stresses the urgent need to combat this problem from the both the supply and demand perspectives. We should continue the endeavour to address demand factors through best practices and lessons learned on the basis of deliberations during the special session at the Review Conference this summer.

I am very proud that Japan has contributed to that progress through its work on the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons, which lays out a clear road map for global efforts. It was not our expectation that no final document would come out of the Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action. However, it is Japan's position that the outcome was not necessarily negative. We did conduct a very good exchange of views, as well as discussions on the implementation of the Programme of Action, through the negotiations on the draft outcome document, and drew the special attention of the international community to the issue by placing the problem of small arms and light weapons on the front burner of disarmament, as Mr. Nobuaki Tanaka, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, said. We can therefore say that the Conference was for the most part successful.

We should continue to make such efforts within the framework of the United Nations. Japan believes that these efforts should be pursued in parallel with efforts at the regional and national levels in order to effectively tackle this problem. Again this year, Japan, together with Colombia and South Africa, has presented a draft resolution entitled "The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects" (A/C.1/61/L.15). An in-depth introduction of the draft resolution will be made by the representative of South Africa. I will therefore limit myself to pointing out that the continuation of our efforts in the context of the United Nations framework is one of the essential points in this year's draft resolution. We sincerely hope that we will receive the support and cooperation of all member States with a view to the consensus adoption of the draft resolution, as we believe that it offers an effective approach to resolving the problem.

While the inclusion of the issue of transparency in armaments in the draft resolution on small arms and light weapons still requires careful consideration in the light of the existence of a specific draft resolution on this matter and the difference in the scope of each draft resolution, our efforts to strengthen confidence-building measures through improved transparency should also be continued.

Certainly, enhancing openness and transparency in armaments is conducive to the prevention of an arms race and excessive arms build-ups, and the issue of transparency in armaments must therefore be recognized as being critically important for the promotion of international disarmament. When the issue of transparency in armaments is brought up for consideration, the contribution of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms can by no means be discounted. The principle was established by the draft resolution on transparency in armaments submitted to the General Assembly in 1991 by Japan, in cooperation with the former European Community. In recent years, more than 110 countries have registered every year, and as of 2004, 170 countries had registered at least once. The fact that so many United Nations Member States participate in the Register is a good indication that the idea that greater mutual security can be achieved through improved transparency in armaments is gradually taking hold.

The meetings of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Conventional Arms Register, the most recent of which was held this year, have steadily generated a great number of welcome accomplishments. The inclusion of man-portable air-defence systems as a new subcategory under "Missiles and missile launchers", and the agreement on a standardized reporting form for small arms and light weapons, are just a couple of recent examples of those accomplishments.

In this manner, through its ongoing review, the reliability of the Register as a confidence-building measure is being improved. Furthermore, while welcoming the steady increase in the number of participating countries, we must continue to strive for the universalization of the Register. Given that the Register is a confidence-building measure, we must literally build confidence through the ongoing involvement of all United Nations Member States.

This year within the Conference on Disarmament we also had effective, in-depth deliberations on transparency in armaments in the framework of a structured debate. We are very pleased about that because, although the issue of transparency in armaments has been on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, over the past few years there have been no substantial discussions on the subject. Japan believes that cooperation between the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament in the field of transparency in armaments should be strengthened. The activities of the Conference on Disarmament this year provided a good basis for such cooperation. The first and most important step to that end is to seriously study and follow the ongoing activities carried out at the national, regional and global levels, and to identify problems which require further action. Furthermore, the establishment in future of a feedback mechanism on the achievements of each forum would be extremely helpful in the accomplishment of our objectives.

Efforts towards the creation of an arms trade treaty within the United Nations framework should also be given due attention. A draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.55) on an arms trade treaty has been submitted to the Committee by like-minded countries, including Japan. Recognizing that there is no common international standard in arms trading, the proposal for an arms trade treaty aims to reduce unregulated and irresponsible weapons transfers. Indeed, ensuring the responsible transfer of arms through an arms trade treaty, and registering arms in accordance with the United Nations Register, are mutually reinforcing measures, contributing to the strengthening of confidence-building and thus enhancing both global and regional security. Against that backdrop, Japan believes that a legally binding instrument on the arms trade should be pursued for the consolidation of global peace and security.

Japan does not, in principle, export arms to other countries, in accordance with its relevant domestic laws as well as its Three Principles on Arms Export, and believes that the international community should make further efforts to effectively regulate the transfer of conventional weapons by establishing a well-defined set of principles. Japan is prepared to make constructive contributions to such efforts.

Mr. Streuli (Switzerland): Switzerland would like take this opportunity to focus briefly on four main issues: the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.55), "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms"; the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms; and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW).

First, Switzerland attaches great importance to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. My delegation supports a follow-up process at the global level. A biennial meeting convened no later than 2008, as referred to the current draft of the respective draft resolution, is of the utmost importance for my delegation.

Switzerland has constantly underlined the importance of taking into account the negative effects on development of armed violence. We organized in Geneva a ministerial summit on armed violence and development on 7 June 2006. Forty-two countries were represented, and adopted the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. Since its adoption, the Geneva Declaration has received support from numerous other States. We see that as an indication of the growing relevance of the issue to the international community. The principles adopted in the Geneva Declaration need to be transformed into concrete measures. To that end, a core group of 10 States is about to be constituted under the coordination of my country. My Government intends to act on three levels.

First, on the diplomatic level, we encourage other States to join the Declaration. Secondly, on the research and knowledge-building level, the linkages between armed violence and development need to be properly addressed. Thirdly, we need to integrate the issue of armed violence into development programmes, both by donor and recipient countries.

With regard to an arms trade treaty, Swiss arms control and disarmament policy seeks, inter alia, to promote predictability, openness, transparency and stability, as well as to bring the transfer of conventional arms under control through the application of mutually agreed principles and agreements. With regard to the draft resolution on an arms trade treaty, I can be brief. Switzerland, as a co-sponsor of the draft resolution, is prepared to contribute substantively towards an arms trade treaty. We strongly support an international legally binding instrument that establishes common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. We are convinced that the United Nations is the appropriate framework for such work. Switzerland therefore supports the establishment of a group of governmental experts to commence work in 2008, as proposed in the current draft resolution.

With regard to the Register of Conventional Arms, Switzerland has long taken a keen interest in the question of transparency in armaments. It constitutes an important factor for building confidence and security among States. My country supported the establishment of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and has been actively participating in it since the beginning of its operations, in 1993. This year's Group of Governmental Experts, in which my country participated, was able to reach a consensus on a final report containing a number of improvements to the Register. We are particularly pleased with the agreed standardized reporting form for international transfers of small arms and light weapons as part of additional background information.

Despite relatively high reporting levels, the Group also noted that the existing scope of the Register is perceived to be more relevant to the security concerns of States in some regions than in other regions. Switzerland therefore advocates the inclusion of small arms and light weapons as an eighth category. Nevertheless, Switzerland still believes that the Register's increased relevance would also produce incentives for greater participation. Switzerland fully supports the Netherlands draft resolution on transparency in armaments, which endorses the consensus recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts. We call upon all Member States to actively participate in the Register.

My last point pertains to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). We attach great importance to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and its five annexed Protocols. Ten years ago, a majority of States parties agreed to convene a first conference to consider proposals to amendment the Convention. Today, we welcome the fact that States parties have succeeded in making the Convention a dynamic instrument capable of continuous adaptation to the development of conventional weapons used in modern warfare. Indeed, since 1996 States parties have continued to find a balance between humanitarian concerns and military necessities by banning, in particular, blinding laser weapons, incendiary weapons in certain circumstances and providing measures to reduce the harmful effects of explosive remnants of war. Switzerland believes that the spirit of those efforts should inspire our reflections

on all issues in the run-up to the upcoming third Review Conference in Geneva.

Although Switzerland has already ratified Protocol V, my delegation is of the opinion that the negative humanitarian effects caused during and after an armed conflict by the use of certain types of munitions, including sub-munitions and cluster bombs, is still unacceptable. Indeed, some interpretations of general rules of existing humanitarian law are too broad to effectively regulate the use of such munitions. We believe that both broader and more concrete measures, including of a preventive technical nature, are necessary. Switzerland therefore supports a mandate for the negotiation of a new legally binding protocol to the CCW aimed at reducing the impact during and after hostilities of the use of such munitions on civilian populations.

Finally, regarding mines other than anti-personnel mines, we are of the view that a new protocol on this matter would have added value for the Convention only if it were to contain norms that strengthen existing international humanitarian law, in particular Amended Protocol II.

Ms. Syed (Norway): Conventional weapons have a legitimate role in strategies to defend States. They also have a heavy impact upon individuals, humanitarian situations and human rights. Some weapons have humanitarian consequences that are not acceptable, or not in conformity with international humanitarian law. A constant flow of illicit weapons has become an often-seen feature of conflicts, regardless of whether sanctions are in place or not. That constitutes a major challenge to both security and development. We must address those problems by also focusing on how to enhance security for individual women, men and children and their communities, not only States. Those are chief concerns for Norway. The First Committee must seize the opportunities before it to take crucial action that will make a real difference for people.

First, Norway is in favour of the Committee's taking of decisive steps towards an arms trade treaty. In our view, the need for such a treaty has been firmly established. Although my delegation is ready to start negotiations now, we realize that several preparatory steps are required. We are pleased to co-sponsor and support the draft resolution put forth by Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom. We hope that concrete work on an arms trade treaty can start soon.

Secondly, Norway places great emphasis on implementing the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Norway strongly favours the holding of biennial meetings of States parties to the Programme of Action, as well as activities to oversee the implementation of the international instrument on marking and tracing. We consider the omnibus draft resolution put forward by South Africa, Colombia and Japan as the prime vehicle to take concrete steps in that regard. Furthermore, we hope for a strong outcome to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering.

Thirdly, to have real impact, measures to regulate the flow of conventional weapons must include the issue of ammunition. To rectify the shortcomings in existing instruments, Norway favours a separate process to address the issue of conventional ammunition in a comprehensive manner. We also endorse the draft resolution introduced by France and Germany on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

Fourthly, we must address the matter of certain cluster munitions and other types of ammunition that cause humanitarian problems for civilian populations during and after armed conflict. It is imperative to start working, without further delay, towards an international ban on the types of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable humanitarian problems. We will support the necessary steps to be taken to that end, including a decision by the States parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) on a clear negotiation mandate at the upcoming Review Conference. Norway supports Sweden's draft resolution on the CCW.

Fifthly, Norway is a staunch supporter of the Mine Ban Convention. Although the Committee does not address the substance of the Treaty, it makes decisions that provide support for statutory meetings. We commend Australia for biennializing the resolution on the Mine Ban Convention and reiterate that biennialization does not diminish the importance of a resolution.

Mr. Zarka (Israel): Conventional arms control requires particular attention by the international

community in view of the growing amount of civilian casualties and human suffering caused by the indiscriminate and irresponsible use of such weapons. States have the legitimate right to use them to ensure their security and defence. However, conventional arms, when used or even obtained by terrorists or by members of organized crime, can clearly have a destabilizing strategic impact.

Arms, as such, do not pose threats. As aptly phrased many years ago, a sword never kills anybody; it is merely a tool in the killer's hand. At the national level, the need for arms is due in most cases to situations in which States are compelled to defend themselves and secure their territory.

The sad reality in the Middle East combines extensive armaments with the illicit transfer of arms to terrorists with hostile intentions. Terrorism cannot sustain itself without the assistance of States that provide it with support and safe haven. When safe haven is not granted, terrorist organizations seize it. They hide themselves and take up positions among civilians, using innocent men, women and children as human shields as they target civilians with missiles and rockets. As we witnessed in the most recent conflict in our region, the use of such weapons by terrorists has major potential for regional and global destabilization.

In that connection, we stress once again the paramount importance of ensuring full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and, more specifically, of operative paragraph 15 of resolution 1701 (2006). It is now clear to all — or at least to most — that the flow of arms to Hizbollah must be immediately and completely stopped.

A way to ease tensions in the regional context is through mutually agreed upon confidence-building measures aimed at reducing tensions and enhancing regional security and stability. Building trust and confidence in a region will reduce the need for armaments. When nations live together in a spirit of peace and good-neighbourliness, it becomes possible to decrease the number of armaments and to increase transparency.

Transparency in armaments can also reduce tensions. We believe that, in principle, the success of transparency is closely tied to the normalization of political and military relations among neighbours. Israel is convinced that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important instrument and that its contribution to regional and global stability and security is undoubted. Since the inauguration of that instrument, Israel has responded annually to the Register regarding its seven categories of major battle weapons. We have done so, despite the lack of trust that exists in our region, in the hope of building confidence in our troubled area. We are encouraged by the successful conclusions of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Register, in which my country participated. We hope that that development will encourage others in the region and elsewhere to provide data to that important instrument.

As we have stressed in our general statement, there is a vital need to identify priorities in order to effectively address the real threats to international peace and stability. In that respect, we believe it necessary for the international community to devote greater attention to the threat of the illicit proliferation of conventional weaponry. Arms need to be controlled at the national level, and effective national restraints on transfers must be instituted. That should be achieved by keeping in mind the proper balance between the legitimate security needs of States and the prevention of unnecessary suffering and loss of life.

My Government sees a serious threat to regional and global security and stability in the irresponsible use and transfer of conventional arms. The consequence of the spread of such weapons — or, worse, of their acquisition by terrorist or criminal elements — is invariably the loss of innocent life. It is our opinion that the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation is through strong national commitment and determination. In order to ensure that that goal is pursued and achieved, international legally binding instruments preventing the proliferation of weapons to terrorists should also be developed.

It is our view that States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that no weapons are transferred from their territory without proper oversight. States must undertake marking and recording procedures for all weapons, rigorous export control, the securing of stockpiles and appropriate national legislation to prevent the misuse and proliferation of arms.

The illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons has affected many societies worldwide, causing suffering primarily to civilian populations. Such transfers exacerbate internal conflicts, thereby

increasing human suffering and threatening peace and security. They not only generate a humanitarian problem, but have also had a considerable economic and social impact at all levels of society.

The United Nations Programme of Action of July 2001 has made a significant contribution to international arms control efforts over the past few years and has made the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons a higher priority. Today, more and more States are aware of the urgent need to implement enhanced standards of control over small arms and light weapons. Surplus small arms and light weapons are being destroyed, and standards related to marking and recordkeeping, as well as to the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons, are becoming globally accepted.

The United Nations Programme of Action was designed to carry out a significant task, namely, to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. The international community mandated the June Review Conference to find effective means to reduce the humanitarian devastation caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Although the Review Conference failed to agree on an outcome document, it reaffirmed the key role of the Programme of Action. Like others, we regret that the Conference was not capable of producing a consensus document.

The outcome of the Conference should encourage the international community to adopt a focused approach identifying concrete measures that can address the illicit aspects of the transfer of small arms and light weapons, rather than trying to regulate the legal and legitimate arms trade. Moreover, the fact that some States chose to divert the focus of the Review Conference to areas remote from the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons could raise serious questions about the effectiveness of the follow-up process.

Israel is ready to continue to explore, with other interested States, ways to identify standards for transfer control that will effectively reduce the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such standards could include implementation of the marking and tracing instrument, full compliance with Security Council arms embargoes, assessment of the risk of diversion to illicit end-users, a ban on the transfer of Man-Portable Defence Systems (MANPADS) to non-State actors, a ban on transfers to terrorists and satisfactory management and control of stockpiles.

One of the significant achievements of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the Register in 2003 was the inclusion of MANPADS as a subcategory under category 7, dealing with missiles. MANPADS were included in the Register as an exception, because that type of weapon system is attractive to terrorist groups, while, on the other hand, it is also a legitimate means of defence for States.

The problem of the illicit proliferation and use of MANPADS encompasses a variety of issues, such as the control and monitoring of that type of weapon, preventing transfers to non-State actors — in particular terrorists — airport security, aircraft protection, scientific cooperation, the collection and destruction of old and surplus missiles, the safeguarding of storage facilities, and technological improvements to prevent unauthorized use.

The threat that those weapons pose to civil aviation is unquestioned. The international community should therefore apply special treatment to the issue of MANPADS. As mentioned earlier, the United Nations Register has already acknowledged MANPADS as a unique type of weapons system by adding it as a subcategory to the reporting requirements. Moreover, the draft resolution on MANPADS introduced in the First Committee by Australia and adopted in the General Assembly as resolution 60/77 underlined the need to apply measures to ensure that these weapons are not directly or indirectly transferred to terrorists or other non-State actors. Moreover, the Wassenaar Arrangement gave due consideration to this threat by adopting, in 2003, Elements for Export Controls of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems, which serve as a solid basis for conducting practical measures to ensure the prevention of their diversion to the wrong hands.

For its part, the Government of Israel has incorporated the Wassenaar guidelines on the transfer of MANPADS into its export control regulations. To our knowledge, Israel is the first — if not the only — non-member State of the Wassenaar Arrangement that has done so, demonstrating that universal application of the Elements is possible and feasible, thus reducing the threat that MANPADS will get into the hands of terrorists.

In addition, as a contribution to the ongoing efforts to address this threat, our Government hosted a

meeting in Jerusalem last April for more than 30 experts from various regions of the world. That experts' meeting underlined, on the one hand, the complexity of the problem, and, on the other, the need to enhance international efforts to address this problem. We intend to continue to work together with other interested States in order to find methods to enhance the implementation of existing international instruments and standards relating to MANPADS and to act to promote the development of other necessary instruments on this issue.

On the question of brokering, Israel welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts and looks forward to its successful outcome. An Israeli expert will participate in the work of the Group, and we have full confidence that the Group will be able to identify measures to address the problem of unauthorized brokers.

Israel sees in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Protocol an important tool to reduce human suffering. The realistic spirit and character of the Convention strikes the right balance between the development of new legally-binding norms on the use of weapons in order to reduce unnecessary human suffering on the one hand, and to take into account the legitimate military needs of States on the other.

As a State party to the Convention, Israel has participated actively in the negotiations of Protocol V on Explosive Remnants of War, and will welcome its entry into force during the Review Conference next month. We attach great importance to that forthcoming meeting. We are of the view that the meeting could adopt a sixth protocol, on mines other than anti-personnel mines, based on the deliberations and negotiations that have taken place in Geneva during the past four years. On the issue of compliance, we hope that the meeting will be able to reach a consensus outcome.

Mr. Tulbure (Moldova): Since this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor in the First Committee during this session, I should like to join previous speakers in sincerely congratulating you, Madam, on your election to serve as Chairperson of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

I would like to take the opportunity offered by this discussion on conventional arms to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to inform the Committee about the actions taken by the Government of the Republic of Moldova regarding small arms and light weapons.

While the international community is trying to eliminate the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, the problem of small arms and light weapons is consistently on the agenda of international gatherings as a very important issue. Hundreds of thousands of people are killed and injured every year by such weapons. Thus, the stability and security of many countries and entire regions are seriously endangered, and the development and prospects for prosperity are minimized, and even denied, because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The Moldovan Government is strongly committed to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and is making all necessary efforts in this respect.

The implementation process of the United Nations Programme of Action has reflected efforts by Moldova to control small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse, both domestically and regionally, as part of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe's Regional Implementation Plan, "Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons", and in the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Moldova's positive involvement in the Implementation Plan, which was revised in May 2006, has included full cooperation with the South-Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for Small Arms and Light Weapons. In addition, Moldova has played an important role within the OSCE in agreeing on important initiatives to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, such as the OSCE Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which sets out criteria to guide decisions by national export control authorities.

At the national level, good progress has been made in terms of revised and improved legislation to cover arms exports, transfers and civilian possession. The stock of weapons that are potentially available for illicit circulation has been continually reduced through the destruction of small arms and light weapons seized

from the civilian population, as demonstrated by the destruction of 1,687 weapons in 2005. Moldova has also achieved a high level of stockpile security, as reflected in the low rate of theft from national stocks. Progress has been made in developing inter-agency coordination on small arms and light weapons issues to enhance the control of such weapons and promote the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. Significant steps have been made to ensure comprehensive planning on this issue through the completion in 2006 of a national small arms and light weapons survey. The survey provides detailed information on the areas in which small arms and light weapons control in the country could be improved, and provides the basis for a future national small arms and light weapons strategy.

The unresolved conflict in the eastern region of Moldova, which is controlled by a separatist regime, remains a serious threat to the political and economic stability of my country and the security of the whole region. The lack of control over the region and its borders strongly limits the Moldovan Government's implementation and enforcement of its commitments to restrain small arms and light weapons proliferation throughout the entire territory of Moldova.

This region remains an area of illegal small arms production and trafficking. Separatist authorities are interested in perpetuating the illegal trade in weapons, as it provides a source of continuous funding for them, and, since 1993, that trade has become one of the most important factors in the economic and military policy of the separatist authorities. The Transdniestrian regime has industrial facilities for the production of light weapons, such as assault rifles, machine guns and multiple and mobile rocket-launching systems, mortars, anti-personnel mines and anti-personnel grenade launchers.

In this connection, I also wish to reiterate our longstanding position that the withdrawal in good faith by the Russian Federation of its troops and armaments, including small arms and light weapons, from the territory of Moldova, in accordance with the OSCE's 1999 Istanbul Summit decision, will decisively facilitate the settlement of the internal conflict and will enhance security and stability, both in Moldova and at the regional level.

The unresolved internal conflict prevents the development and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including the effective collection, control, storage and destruction of small arms and light weapons in the Transdniestrian region of Moldova. Also, no international monitoring missions are allowed to inspect the illegal facilities for the production of arms, ammunition and other military goods belonging to the separatist entity.

Currently, with the assistance of the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine, which was launched in November 2005, in close cooperation with Ukraine, efforts are being made to secure the Eastern border of the country. We hope that, with the Assistance Mission's help, the control at this border will be restored and the phenomenon of illicit trafficking in all its aspects will be effectively countered.

I would like also to take this opportunity to refer to the ongoing consultations on the draft resolution on the arms trade treaty. As a country confronted with an irreducible internal conflict, foreign troops still stationed illegally on a part of its territory not yet controlled by the central Government, the registration of illegal production and trafficking and the violation of human rights by a separatist entity supported from abroad, Moldova understands and recognizes the value of the arms trade treaty principles proposed by the United Kingdom, Finland and other like-minded countries. In particular, we stand strongly behind those principles that seek to prevent the unlawful transfers of conventional arms and to stem the destabilizing accumulations of small arms and light weapons, which can undermine the international humanitarian order and exacerbate intra-State and regional conflict.

We believe that the development of a framework convention on international arms transfers is not only necessary but also achievable since many of the proposed principles are based on existing State obligations under international law with respect to the international transfer of arms and, therefore, implicitly reflect areas of international consensus. Moreover, national and regional legislation and regulative measures have already been taken to address the matter. The international community thus has in its hands the conceptual tools needed to act more resolutely in tackling this problem as a priority issue.

Keeping in mind that, at the global level, not all States agree to conclude, at this stage, compulsory

instruments regulating various dimensions of the arms trade, including agreements regarding the marking and tracing, brokering and transfer of small arms and light weapons, as well as end-use monitoring, we find reasonable the proposed step-by-step approach in the elaboration of a binding regime under an arms trade treaty.

Mr. Adji (Indonesia): Indonesia reaffirms the validity of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. These weapons have repeatedly proved their capacity to inflict and prolong human suffering and inhibit economic development. This problem is widely shared by Governments and civil society, both within the afflicted areas, as well as in the wider international community. It is disappointing, however, that despite this common view, the 2006 Review Conference was unable to provide a mandate to the General Assembly on follow-up steps for the Programme's further implementation.

My delegation believes that the issue of follow-up is imperative in the efforts of the international community to combat illicit small arms and light weapons. In this regard, my delegation will join efforts by almost all countries to advance the issue of follow-up to the Programme of Action within the context of the United Nations. We are encouraged to see that many countries have also voiced a similar desire. My delegation will again support the omnibus small arms and light weapons draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.15) put forward this year by South Africa, Japan and Colombia.

My delegation also looks forward to convening next month of the Group of Governmental Experts on brokering activities, in the hope that this meeting will urgently address a serious gap with regard to combating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

We welcome the process leading to the establishment of a common international standard on the import, export and transfer of conventional arms within the context of the United Nations. My delegation is flexible and does not object to a treaty that will enforce control over the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons, thus preventing their acquisition by irresponsible entities — provided that this does not hamper legitimate transfers between Governments for self-defence and security needs.

Such common international standards should be negotiated multilaterally, and take into consideration the views and concerns of as many States as possible, including those of the developing countries, which are the main importers of such weapons.

We welcome the series of consultations on the draft resolution on the arms trade treaty that were held both in Geneva and in New York, and which resulted in improvements to the draft resolution. We welcome the inclusion of a new operative paragraph that allows the broader United Nations membership to provide their views on this matter. We encourage Member States to make use of this opportunity to express their views.

In order to further ensure total representation on the matter, we believe that not only should the Group of Governmental Experts fulfil the requirement of equitable geographical distribution, but also be fully representative of the widest spectrum of views across the board. In this regard, the role of the Secretary-General in determining participation in the Group of Governmental Experts is crucial for the success of this process.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary General (A/61/261) containing the recommendations from the consensus report of the 2006 Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development. Notwithstanding the many discouraging trends in the field of disarmament, the consensus reached in the Group of Governmental Experts regarding the Register of Conventional Arms represents an island of success.

We are encouraged to see that the Group came up with recommendations to further strengthen the operation of the Register, including an optional standardized form available for Member States to report their small arms and light weapons transfers. We also welcome the reduction of the reporting threshold for warships and submarines from 750 metric tons to 500 metric tons, allowing for greater numbers and types of warships to be included in the Register. These recommendations will further reduce the risk of misunderstanding and miscalculation, and increase confidence and trust among nations.

My delegation believes that the report of the Group has taken another step towards accounting for the needs and concerns of more countries previously not adequately addressed in the Register. It is the

sincere hope of my delegation that the report will contribute to increased participation of States in the Register, as well as maintain the Register's relevance for more countries.

Indonesia was among the first countries to sign the Mine Ban Convention in Ottawa in 1997 and fully shares the values of the Convention to put an end to the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines. The process of ratification was, however, delayed due to the multidimensional crises that beset my country and that have required our collective energy to address them. The political and economic stability that has followed the successful and smooth democratic transition of Government in my country in 2004 has enabled Indonesia to revisit its efforts to ratify the Treaty.

Tardiness in ratifying the Convention does not indicate our lack of commitment to the principles and objectives of the Convention and our commitment towards its universalization. As a non-user and non-producer, as well as a non-affected country, Indonesia fully shares and continues to commit itself to the spirit and purpose of the Convention since its inception. It is in this regard that Indonesia has always been supportive of all resolutions on landmines in the General Assembly since 1996.

As a State signatory of the Convention, Indonesia is well aware of the concerns of States parties regarding the status of Indonesia's ratification process. One month ago, on 11 September 2006, the Government of Indonesia submitted a draft law of ratification to the Parliament for consideration. With this submission, Indonesia is now in the final stage of the ratification process. With this progress, Indonesia is looking forward to playing its part to universalize the values contained in the Mine Ban Treaty.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: We have heard the last speaker for this afternoon's meeting since, as was announced, we have to adjourn by 5 p.m. There are still a number of delegations wishing to make statements and introduce draft resolutions on today's thematic subject. Consequently, it is my intention to provide time on Monday, 16 October, to conclude our thematic discussion on conventional weapons. Afterwards, the Committee shall move on to its thematic discussion on the subjects of other disarmament measures and international security.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/61/PV.14

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

First Committee

14th meeting

Monday, 16 October 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: Today we will have our thematic discussion on the subject of other disarmament measures and international security. However, as I mentioned previously, I will allow those remaining delegations that, on Friday, 13 October, were unable to make their statements on conventional weapons or to introduce draft resolutions to do so today.

Before we proceed, the Committee will first have a panel discussion with Mr. Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission. Afterwards, Mr. John Barrett, Chairman of the Panel of Government Experts on Verification, will be our guest speaker. I first call on Mr. Blix to make his statement.

Mr. Blix (Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission): Let me first, Madam, thank you and the Committee for giving me this opportunity to address the Committee during its thematic discussion. My comments will touch upon many matters that are covered by items on the Committee's agenda. I shall make my comments against the background of the analysis and recommendations contained in the report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, which I have had the honour to chair. Representatives will find copies of the report on their desks. However, the comments are, of course, my own.

The report is entitled "Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms", and copies are available to all members. It was adopted unanimously by the 14 members of the Commission and was launched here at the United Nations on 1 June this year. It discusses and seeks to tackle the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and it contains 60 concrete recommendations for action. Its central message is that the global process of arms control and disarmament, which has stagnated in the last decade, must be revived and pursued in parallel with the efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction to further States and to terrorists. The report deals with all types of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, biological and chemical — but my remarks today will focus primarily on the threats posed by nuclear weapons and by States.

Some might argue that there is no need for further global disarmament and arms control, pointing to the reduction that has taken place in nuclear arsenals — from an estimated number of more than 50,000 to 27,000 weapons, including a dramatic reduction in, or withdrawal of, tactical weapons under the 1991 Bush-Gorbachev presidential nuclear initiative. Another reduction, also unverified, is to be expected by 2012 under the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty. While that is most welcome, it relates to what the States concerned themselves consider to be surplus

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weapons. What remains after those reductions is ample to destroy our planet. What is acutely worrisome is that many developments are going in the wrong direction. Let me give a few examples.

Several nuclear-weapon States do not give pledges against a first use of nuclear weapons. The development of a missile shield in the United States is perceived by China and Russia as a measure potentially allowing the United States to threaten them, while creating immunity for the United States. Countermeasures can be expected. The development and testing of new types of nuclear weapons is being urged by influential groups in the United States, and in the United Kingdom many expect a Government decision about a renewal of the nuclear weapons programme, stretching it far beyond 2020. The stationing of weapons in space is being considered in the United States. If that were to occur, other States might follow and threats may arise to the world's peaceful uses of space and the enormous investments that have been made in that regard.

When we regard those developments as deeply worrisome and threatening, it is because they increase the risk of the use of weapons. It is the use of the weapons that kills. We might do well to remember that the international community's early approach to weapons of mass destruction was in the form of bans on use, not bans on production. That was true of the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, as well as of all rules in those matters adopted earlier in The Hague Conventions.

With the emergence of nuclear weapons and their horrendous effects at the end of the Second World War, two new avenues were followed by the world community. First, the threat or use of force — any force — against the territorial integrity and political independence of any State was prohibited in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations. The outlawing of all use of armed force, if effective, would evidently constitute an assurance against the use of nuclear force. There were, however, two exceptions to the rule set out in Article 2, paragraph 4. The first was Article 51, which preserved the right to self-defence when an armed attack occurred, until the Security Council had taken the necessary measures. The other exception allowed the use of armed force in situations that constituted threats to the peace, breaches of the peace or acts of aggression. While that category of situations was broader than that of an armed attack, the use of force in those cases was subject to decision by the Security Council. The Security Council had, and still has, much broader authority to authorize the use of armed force than that of the right to self-defence, which is limited to cases of armed attack.

A second approach was based on the thought that the best guarantee against the use of a weapon would be in assuring the absence of the weapon through bans on production, acquisition and stockpiling. Already in 1946 the General Assembly had declared its determination to physically eliminate atomic weapons — as it called them — and other weapons of mass destruction. However, while violations of a ban on the use of weapons of mass destruction would, in all likelihood, be visible, a violation of a ban on stockpiling could be hidden. To be reliable, the new approach prohibiting production therefore required international inspection. The authors of the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) did take an important step beyond the 1925 Protocol, prohibiting the production and stockpiling of biological weapons. However, during the cold war they were not able to agree on machinery for verification and inspection. The Soviet Union and Iraq, and perhaps others, were later able to violate the ban imposed by the BWC without being detected at the time.

I should add that the absence of machinery for inspection and/or monitoring remains a weakness in the BWC. In recommendations 31 to 35 of the WMD Commission report, we have included a number of ideas for the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, including the establishment of a unit of experts on biological weapons, similar to the roster of inspectors we had at our disposal in connection with the Iraq inspections, which I headed.

Finishing their work after the end of the cold war, the authors of the 1996 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) were able to establish machinery for inspection and verification with regard to the universal ban on the use, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons. The WMD Commission makes several recommendations aimed at improving the implementation of the Convention, including speeding up the destruction of chemical weapons. However, the Convention is seen by the Commission as a success story.

The situation of nuclear weapons is different from that of biological and chemical weapons. While the International Court of Justice, in an advisory opinion, saw an extremely limited scope for the legal use of nuclear weapons, a convention banning their use has not been attainable. Their elimination has not been achieved, but it has been sought through a fragmentary approach. I will specify how.

The first element is to ban the deployment of nuclear weapons in various environments — the Antarctic, the seabed and outer space — which is the Bonn approach. The second is to eliminate their qualitative development through treaty bans on testing, including the Partial Test Ban Treaty and the following treaties. The third is to limit the possession of nuclear weapons through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, which limit the possession of such weapons in particular areas and among States adhering to the NPT. The fourth is to oblige nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT to pursue negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament — this is also evident — aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons in due course through successful negotiations. The last way is to issue guarantees against use, on certain conditions, to States forgoing nuclear weapons: negative security guarantees.

When we consider the threat of nuclear weapons today, it is important to remember both of the basic approaches that the world has taken: the general prohibition of the use of force — including by nuclear means — and the physical elimination of nuclear weapons. Those two approaches are related. As stated in the European Union Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction:

> "The best solution to the problem of proliferation of WMD is that countries should no longer feel they need them. If possible, political solutions should be found to the problems, which lead them to seek WMD. The more secure countries feel, the more likely they are to abandon programmes".

In examining cases of non-compliance, the WMD Commission notes on pages 66 and 67 of its report that

> "In many cases, perceived threats to security have been the incentive for the acquisition of nuclear weapons and security guarantees of various kinds have offered disincentives. It is not unreasonable to think that the Governments of Libya, Iran and North Korea, often isolated, have convinced themselves that their security was threatened. In the case of Iran there was also a very real threat from Iraq, which armed itself with WMD and used chemical weapons against Iran during the long war of the 1980s. It is possible that in such States incentives to acquire nuclear weapons may be reduced by offers of normal relations and by assurances that military intervention or subversion aiming at regime change will not be undertaken."

In the case of North Korea, the Six-Party Talks — which have been suspended for about one year and whose revival is sought — seem to have proceeded on the basis of that philosophy. Individual national postures are more varied.

At this point, I would like to add that it would be of equal, if not greater, importance if all United Nations Members, in order to help convince States that they do not need weapons of mass destruction, followed a practice of genuine respect for the already existing Charter restraints on the threat or use of force, as set out in paragraph 4 of Article 2, to which I have referred. If all States followed a practice of respecting those restrictions, specific individual assurances against the use of force would not be needed; they would be redundant.

I now turn to the NPT. We often hear warnings that the most central global instrument in which States have committed themselves not to acquire nuclear weapons and to pursue nuclear disarmament is in risk of collapse. While readily recognizing that the Treaty is under strain, the Commission notes that the world is not replete with would-be violators and that the overwhelming commitment to the Treaty remains of tremendous value. Iraq and Libya were found to be in violation of the Treaty and have been brought back into compliance with it. In two other cases, North Korea and Iran, the world is now actively seeking solutions. Are there any other problematic cases? Not to my knowledge.

Does the verification system — the safeguards system — need to be strengthened? Yes. Universal acceptance of the additional protocol, which is our third recommendation, would do much to strengthen confidence. The effective functioning of the safeguards system should never have to suffer for financial

reasons. It would be paradoxical, in my view, for the world community to spend billions on inspections to ensure that no material or equipment of nuclear relevance is transported in containers or baggage in air travel and then to deny the IAEA safeguards system its fullest support.

Does the NPT need a standing secretariat? Yes, in the view of the Commission. The world should not be without sensible administrative support in handling one of its most important treaties. Such a secretariat should be tasked to organize and prepare the review conferences and their preparatory committee sessions. It should also organize other Treaty-related meetings at the request of a majority of parties.

A more momentous problem with the NPT is the implementation — or, rather, the lack of implementation — of article VI, which enjoins the nuclear-weapon States parties to negotiate towards nuclear disarmament. In its very first recommendation in the report, the Commission submits that all parties to the Treaty should revert to the fundamental and balanced non-proliferation and disarmament commitments made under the Treaty and confirmed in 1995, when the Treaty was extended indefinitely.

It is not — I believe — as if there will be any mass withdrawals from the Treaty by non-nuclear-weapon States because they feel that article VI has not been respected. Most States have joined not principally to obtain a nuclear disarmament pledge from the nuclear-weapon States, but to send a message of assurance regarding their own status and to receive assurances from others, including neighbours. Yet there is a strong feeling of frustration, even of being cheated. The moral authority of the "have" States is undermined when they loosen, rather than restricting, their doctrines on the use of nuclear weapons and when they are in the process of deciding on the development of new types of weapons, rather than considering how they could manage their defence needs with other than nuclear weapons.

I am not contending that negotiations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran would be easy under any circumstances. But I suspect that they might be somewhat less difficult if the participating nuclear-weapon States could show that they themselves were actively moving towards — and leading the world towards — nuclear disarmament. While the Commission argues for the goal of a convention outlawing nuclear weapons in a manner similar to what has been done regarding biological and chemical weapons, there are many more modest steps that could and should be taken without delay.

So, what needs to be done? The security of States and peoples must be sought more through cooperation and negotiation and less through military threats and force. The disasters in Iraq and Lebanon show the tragic consequences of an excessive faith in what armed force can achieve. A boosting of the nuclear option in States possessing nuclear weapons, combined with military threats, seems more likely to encourage nuclear proliferation in States that feel threatened than to dissuade them from such proliferation.

Here, I shall go through some of the recommendations of the WMD Commission in relation to nuclear weapons, starting with suggested system-level measures and reforms.

The Security Council is entrusted with a great responsibility. The Council's potential should be used out prudently, consistently and in conformity with the Charter. The Commission's report suggests that the Security Council should establish a small subsidiary unit that could provide professional technical information and advice on matters relating to weapons of mass destruction. At the present juncture, such independent advice would have been of interest as regards the question of the nature of the recent explosion in North Korea. It has not quite yet been established what kind of explosion that was. I might also add that if the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) had been in force, the world could have been well informed about the nature of the explosion through the system of verification that exists within the CTBT office in Vienna.

The Conference of Disarmament at Geneva, the principal international forum for negotiation as regards issues related to weapons of mass destruction, has, as the Committee is aware, been unable to adopt a programme of work for almost a decade. As a result, no substantive issues have been discussed or negotiated in the Conference during that time. That is the unsatisfactory result of a consensus requirement that has its roots in cold war practices. It is hard for public opinion to understand that talks are not taking place. The Commission suggests that, to enable the Commission on Disarmament to function, it should be enabled to make administrative and procedural

decisions, including the adoption of its programme of work, by a qualified majority of two thirds of the membership present and voting.

Furthermore, given the setbacks in arms control and disarmament at the 2005 NPT Review Conference and 2005 World Summit, as well as the continued stalemate, there is, in the view of the Commission, a need to give new impetus to, and reset the stage for, a credible multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation process. The Commission suggests that the General Assembly should convene a world summit on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction. As thorough preparations would be necessary, planning for such a summit should start as soon as possible.

I turn now to a number of the substantive measures that the Commission recommends to reduce the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the dangers of existing arsenals. No measure could be more urgent or important in substance as a signal that arms control and disarmament are again on the world agenda than the signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by States that have not yet done so. That is recommendation 28 of the report. If, instead, the Treaty were seen to lapse, there would be an increased risk that some State might restart weapon tests. To demand from North Korea that that country should deposit its ratification of the Treaty — which is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force — would be easier if all the States participating in the Six-Party Talks had themselves, ratified the Treaty, which is not the case.

Negotiating without further delay a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for weapons is the next most urgent issue that the Commission believes should be tackled. The combination of a continued reduction in the number of existing nuclear weapons and a verified closing of the tap for more weapon-fissile material would gradually reduce the world's inventory of bombs. As the Committee is aware, a draft cut-off treaty has been introduced in Geneva. It has important weaknesses, but it should be welcomed as a draft to be discussed.

The Commission is of the view that, for such a treaty to be meaningful, it must provide for effective international verification. Independent international verification is already carried out by the European Atomic Energy Community in two nuclear-weapon States, namely, France and the United Kingdom. Enrichment plants in Brazil and Japan are subject to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards verification. If there is no effective international verification of a fissile materials cut-off treaty, any controversy about respect for the treaty would have to be discussed on the basis of evidence that came only from national means of verification. We know from the case of Iraq that that would not be satisfactory. Moreover, without independent verification, suspicions about violations might arise and lead to a race between some countries in the production of fissile material.

Further steps by all nuclear-weapon States towards reducing strategic nuclear arsenals would be significant as confidence-building measures allowing for further positive developments. The Commission recommends that the United States and Russia, which have the most nuclear weapons, should take the lead. With increased cooperation between Russia and European Union, Russian tactical nuclear weapons should be withdrawn from forward deployment to central storage, and United States tactical nuclear weapons should be withdrawn from Europe to United States territory.

In the view of the Commission, all States that have nuclear weapons should commit themselves categorically to a policy of no-first-use, and the United States and Russia should reciprocally take their nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.

Given that reliance on nuclear power is expected to increase, we can anticipate the need for greater production of low-enrichment uranium fuel and for the disposal of spent fuel. That must occur in a manner that does not increase the risk of diversion of material and the risk of proliferation. As the Committee is aware, there are various proposals on the table, and possibilities should be explored for international arrangements to ensure the availability of nuclear fuel for civilian reactors while minimizing the risk of weapons proliferation. As the Commission suggests, the IAEA is the most suitable forum for such exploration. Discussions in that regard recently took place at a special event in connection with the IAEA General Conference, and the issue will continue to be discussed at the IAEA.

The Commission is of the view that the production of highly enriched uranium should be phased out.

Regional approaches should also be developed further, especially in sensitive areas. It would, for example, be desirable to obtain commitments from States on the Korean peninsula and in the Middle East, including Iran and Israel, that they would accept a verified suspension for a prolonged period of time of any production of enriched uranium and plutonium while obtaining international assurances of the supply of fuel for any civilian nuclear power. That is the subject of the Commission's twelfth recommendation.

Lastly, the Committee will not be surprised to hear me say that international professional inspection — such as has been practiced under the auspices of the United Nations by the Special Commission established pursuant to Security Council resolution 687 (1991), the Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, the IAEA and by the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons — is an important, and economical, tool for verification. Such inspection does not in any way stand in contradiction to national means of verification. Rather, those two means of fact-finding supplement each other. Many States have no national means that they can use and should not have to be dependent upon the national intelligence means of other States. States that operate such intelligence may, in a one-way-traffic arrangement, provide information to the international verification system to help to put them on the right track on their investigations. On the other hand, the reports of international organizations offer Governments an opportunity to carry out a quality check on their national systems, as well as to corroborate conclusions they have reached.

I am looking forward to answer any questions that anyone might like to put to me.

The Chairperson: I thank Mr. Blix for his presentation.

It is now my intention to provide the Committee with an opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our panellist by having an informal question and answer session. I will now suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal mode.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

The Chairperson: The Committee will now hear a statement by Mr. John Barrett, Chairman of the Panel of Government Experts on Verification, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Barrett (Panel of Government Experts on Verification): Thank you, Madam Chairperson, for the invitation to come to the First Committee today to give a presentation and update on the work of the Panel of Government Experts on Verification in All its Aspects, including the Role of the United Nations in the Field of Verification.

General Assembly resolution 59/60 established the Panel of Government Experts to "explore the question of verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification" (para. 3). This is the third such United Nations panel on verification; the previous ones were held in 1990 and 1995. The Panel is chaired by Canada; we met for three one-week sessions. The first was held in New York from 30 January to 3 February, the second was held in Geneva from 8 to 12 May and the third was held here at United Nations Headquarters from 7 to 11 August.

The final product of our work will be a report. Under United Nations guidelines, the report is under a strict word limitation. The word limitation effectively keeps our report to no more than 16 pages in length. What the Committee will see, provided that we reach a final consensus agreement, will be a relatively short report — certainly by comparison with the previous reports of 1990 and 1995. However, this constraint has inspired Panel members to work towards a relatively short, action-oriented report, which will include some recommendations, for consideration by Member States.

The aim of the Panel has been, from the outset, a consensus report, which we, the Panel members, would submit to the Secretary-General and to this Committee for its consideration and, we hope, for its endorsement. The Chair of the Panel is required to submit his report to the Secretary-General during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, a point to which I shall return a bit later.

Panel members have been acutely aware that our work should be as open as possible to the concerns and views of other Member States. This is not only a matter of transparency, but it also comes from a genuine desire to be as inclusive as possible. We are not writing this report or developing recommendations for the

panel members only. Instead, we are seeking, in a modest but hopefully useful way, to build anew a broad consensus on verification in all its aspects, and on the role of verification in contributing to the security of each and every one of us today and in the future.

I will return to the issue of consensus-building and how we set about addressing this in our work. First though, I would like to say a word or two about the panel composition and its working methods. There are 16 members on the Panel; they are Argentina, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and Ukraine. This membership was determined by geographical representation and interest shown.

Some United Nations Member States initially expressed disappointment at not being selected for the Panel. However, the number of experts on the Panel — 16 — was determined in keeping with a panel's reduced size in comparison with a group. Moreover, the budget was not strong enough to financially support the travel and costs of a larger Panel membership.

Because of the wide interest shown in the subject of verification, Panel members agreed from the very start that the Chair should use whatever opportunities were available to describe our work and the approach taken in the Panel. To this end, the Chair held two lunchtime outreach sessions for United Nations Missions. The first was in New York on 25 April on the margins of the Disarmament Commission's annual meeting; the second outreach session was in Geneva on 11 May on the margins of the Panel's second meeting. One could consider my presentation today as the third in our series of outreach and transparency efforts. That is why I was so eager to accept the kind invitation of the Chairperson of the First Committee to address this Committee during its thematic debate on the subject of verification in all its aspects.

I will now say a word about the Panel's scope and working methods. The Panel's work encompasses nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, as well as their means of delivery. It also encompasses conventional weapons. We have also looked at verification as it applies to activities involving non-State actors, as well as States.

During the first two sessions, we looked at existing verification regimes in their specific contexts, examining strengths and shortcomings in terms of methods, procedures and technologies. The first session concentrated more on weapons of mass destruction verification. The second shifted the focus more to conventional weapons and to means of delivery. The third session delved a bit deeper into aspects of United Nations arms embargoes and sanctions on illicit transfers of conventional weapons and the role of verification in such circumstances. However, the bulk of the third session was devoted to a detailed, line-by-line reading and discussion of the draft Panel report and its recommendations.

In order to stimulate discussion and provide food for thought, the Chair invited experts from a wide range of non-proliferation and arms control fields to give presentations to the Panel. During our three sessions, the Panel received experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency; the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission; the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004); the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate; the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs; and the Group of Experts monitoring the arms embargo in regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We heard also from two representatives from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research.

We also received presentations from a number of experts from non-governmental organizations. We heard from Amy Smithson of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jean Pascal Zanders of the BioWeapons Prevention Project, Michael Krepon of the Stimson Center, Olivia Bosch of Chatham House, Pierre Goldschmidt of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Glenn McDonald of the Small Arms Survey and Mary Wareham of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

In order to further stimulate discussion, the Chair asked Panel members to consider submitting their own short papers on selected aspects of verification. These internal papers were done in the spirit of analysis and reflection and thus have not been more widely circulated by the Chair.

As United Nations Members will know, the Secretary-General invited all States that so wished to submit in written form for the Panel's consideration their views on the subject of verification in all its aspects. The following countries did so: Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Finland, Guatemala, Iran, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Panama, Portugal, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro as it was then, Suriname and Sweden. On behalf of the Panel, I thank all of those States for their contributions.

Turning to the report, given the short amount of time available to the Panel, the detailed work contained the earlier 1990 and 1995 reports of the respective Groups of Governmental Experts was not revisited. However, it is clear that the Panel's work builds on the foundations laid by those two earlier reports. What we have sought to do in our Panel is to focus in particular on what I would call value added. That means that we have looked at what has changed in the past decade in the international security environment and the security needs of States, and how verification has addressed those needs and could do so in the future. In the light of that approach, the report is structured organically, rather than being institution-centric. We have identified and examined themes relating to verification, not the performance of specific treaty regimes.

We did not believe that, as a Panel, our job was to issue a report card or a critical evaluation of how well an existing verification regime was functioning. Rather, we have tried to be constructive and forward-looking, identifying areas which should be given greater attention by States in making verification a more useful and effective instrument in addressing States' security needs. The Panel also did not try to sit in judgement on issues relating to States' compliance with specific international treaty obligations or political commitments. It was recognized that the responsibility for that kind of judgement belongs in other bodies, not in our Panel. However, that is not to say that the relationship between verification and compliance was neglected. Indeed, the conceptual relationship between the two forms the backbone of the Panel's approach and draft report.

During our discussions, certain themes consistently emerged. Among them were the concept of verification; verification experiences; techniques and methodologies of verification; and the need to build synergies and complementarity among bodies or agencies with responsibilities in the area of monitoring and verification. Other themes also emerged, including capacity-building, both in WMD-related verification and non-WMD, or conventional, verification; the role of the United Nations; and the contribution of civil society in helping to build capacity in certain regions for specific kinds of monitoring.

There are four main chapters in the draft report. These are: the purpose of verification; evolution of the concept of verification in the light of developments since 1995; developments in methods, procedures and technologies for the verification of compliance; and verification and compliance mechanisms. Each chapter comprises background, relevant information, facts and figures; issues, concerns and problems that the Panel feels need to be addressed; possible approaches to addressing such issues and concerns; and general recommendations as to the way forward.

I think that it is important that there be clarity, in this audience in particular, about the nature of the report's draft recommendations. They are not portrayed as quick solutions to all the world's ills. Nor do we have a magic wand that, once waved, will somehow fix verification for eternity. Instead, we have started on broad, general foundations, looking to point the way forward in a practical way on what States may themselves wish to take up and work on together.

Our draft report does not therefore presume to tell the sovereign States Members of the United Nations what they should or should not do in the area of verification. Indeed, we do not use the word "should", as it implies a prescriptive quality which we did not want to bring into the report. We talked instead of "could", because the decisions ultimately lie with Member States.

What the report tries to do is develop the basis for a new and widening consensus on the relationship of verification to the security of all States and on how its role could be enhanced in contributing to that security. Verification, as we say emphatically in the draft report, is a toolbox into which we can put very useful instruments to enhance our security, if States have the will and determination to do so.

Finally, I would like to say a couple of words on the way forward. After the first session of the Panel, the Chair compiled a draft narrative report which contained emerging ideas that were brought out of the Panel's discussions. Draft recommendations, based on the initial narrative report and on discussions that

followed, were presented to members at the completion of the second session. Suggestions and comments were received, and the recommendations were reworked in the light of this feedback.

Nearly all of the third session in August, as I mentioned earlier, was devoted to intense discussion and line-by-line scrutiny of the narrative part of the draft report and its recommendations. Unfortunately, on the last day of our meeting, and just as we were on the verge of a consensus text, we ran out of time. We needed further discussion on several key points that were very, very close to agreement, but we were not quite there yet.

As a result, and with the full support of Panel members, the Chair decided to end that meeting "on an interim basis" and declared that the Chair would continue consultations to explore the prospect of reaching agreement on the text. Since then, I have indeed been carrying out consultations, and I am optimistic that we can settle the remaining differences in the near future.

These differences, I would strongly underline, are in the narrative and descriptive parts of the text, not in the fundamental part of the recommendations. The differences have to do with how much we say about one thing or how little about another. It is like having the old-fashioned scales that you might see in a shop, where the shopkeeper first puts the bigger weights on the scales to find the balance. Then, as the balance gets ever closer and finer, he adds a pinch here, takes away a leaf or two there, and a balance is found. We are now at that stage of finding the right pinch here and there.

So it is with this text. But that has meant that we have been unable to submit the Panel's report to the First Committee in time for its consideration this autumn. Even if we reach our final agreement in the next weeks, which is certainly not out of the question, we cannot satisfy the translation and preparation requirements in time. Unfortunately, we have just missed that deadline.

Yet, despite this, I am optimistic and confident that we will be able to present to the First Committee during the course of the sixty-first session a report that reflects the consensus of all Panel members. And I believe that that would be an important achievement and worthy of the Committee's consideration, indeed of its endorsement, as a useful, practical compendium of observations, analyses and recommendations on this key subject of verification in all its aspects.

And now I would be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have regarding the work of the Panel of Government Experts on Verification.

The Chairperson: I thank Mr. Barrett for his presentation. It is my intention to provide the Committee with the opportunity to have an interactive discussion with our guest speaker by having an informal question and answer session. I will again suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal mode.

The meeting was suspended at 11.50 a.m. and resumed at 12.20 p.m.

The Chairperson: The Committee will now continue with its thematic debate on conventional weapons. I will now give the floor to delegations that have been unable to make statements on conventional weapons so far. There is still a long list of speakers on the issue of conventional weapons, so I plead with representatives to try to be as brief as possible. I would like to add that I think that we have had a very positive and active interactive debate so far within the thematic clusters, and I think that that is something that we should appreciate and value, even if we are running a little behind schedule.

Ms. Millar (Australia): I am taking the floor to raise several issues of the utmost importance in this discussion on conventional weapons.

A little over nine years ago, States agreed in Oslo to the text of a Convention to ban anti-personnel landmines. That text has entered into force as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction. Today, there are 151 States parties to the Convention, which, since its introduction, has made significant headway in ridding the world, once and for all, of the suffering caused by those insidious weapons. Thirty-three of the States that previously manufactured mines have become States parties; 38 million mines have been destroyed, and another 10 million are scheduled to be destroyed by 12 States parties; seven of 52 States parties affected by landmines have cleared their mined areas, including, most recently, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and for the first time, a disarmament treaty is addressing effectively the needs of survivors.

Australia is honoured to have been appointed to the presidency of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Convention, which concluded in Geneva last month. At that meeting, the States parties made significant headway in their effort to address the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. Most important, the Meeting adopted a process to assist States parties in fulfilling their obligations to clear and destroy all known landmines.

The Meeting also discussed practical measures to assist landmine survivors and make progress on implementation of other aspects of the Convention. Australia was pleased to announce at that Meeting our Government's recent decision to provide a second tranche of multi-year funding for mine action: $75 million over five years. Copies of the Australian mine action strategy are available for delegations at the back of this room. We also announced an Action Plan for the universalization of the Convention. As part of this, Australia will fund a small States workshop to promote adherence and implementation among States in South-East Asia and the Pacific. As President, we will contact States not party so as to encourage ratification or accession. Australia will also present to the First Committee a draft resolution on the implementation of the Convention.

The international community made far less progress when it met to consider implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons earlier this year. That was a great disappointment for Australia, for we are witness to the terrible consequences of the illicit production and transfer of small arms and light weapons in our region without regard to the vulnerability of small States.

The international community needs to take firm action to implement the Programme of Action. For that reason, Australia welcomes the proposed omnibus draft resolution (A/C.1/61/L.15) on small arms and light weapons, including its scheduling of a biennial meeting by no later than 2008. But States must make the most of this opportunity by ensuring that the biennial meeting is focused on practical steps to implement the Programme of Action.

Australia is also very pleased to be a co-author of draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.55, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms". The absence of common international standards on the trade in and transfer of conventional arms is a contributing factor to conflict, crime and terrorism, thereby undermining peace and security. A legally binding instrument which establishes common international standards on the trade and transfer of conventional weapons would help to address these negative consequences. Australia urges States to support the draft resolution by sponsoring it.

Last year, Australia presented a draft resolution (A/C.1/60/L.49/Rev.1) on preventing the illicit transfer of and unauthorized access to and use of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS). We welcomed the Committee's decision to adopt that draft resolution by consensus. Australia will not this year be presenting a revised text to the First Committee, consistent with our support for efforts to improve the work of the Committee through biennialization. However, the need for States to implement General Assembly resolution 60/77 remains undiminished. States need to implement effective controls over the production, storage and transfer of such weapons so as to prevent their misuse by non-State actors, in particular terrorists.

A seminar hosted by the Australian Permanent Mission in Geneva in June this year highlighted a range of national, bilateral and international measures to combat MANPADS proliferation. Participants heard how effective launch-denial strategies can reduce the risk of attack from areas close to the flight paths of major civilian airports; how one State's bilateral cooperation programme has secured and destroyed some 18,500 surplus MANPADS in 18 countries since 2003; and how better controls over intellectual property and originator licensing for re-export could help counter MANPADS proliferation.

Australia continues to play a leading role in the Asia-Pacific region in helping to build the capacity of countries to manage the security of their MANPADS stockpiles. This week, Australia is co-hosting, with Thailand, an Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum workshop, which provides an opportunity for participant States to share information on stockpile management best practice and to discuss the potential for future capacity-building assistance.

I am pleased to announce that the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations here in New York will shortly issue invitations to delegations for a seminar on 2 November to explore further those and other measures States can take to help prevent the

proliferation of MANPADS to non-State actors. We look forward to delegations' attendance at that important seminar.

Mr. Reiterer (Austria): As my delegation is taking the floor for the first time this session, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on your election as Chairperson of the First Committee and on the way in which you have been guiding our work over the past two weeks.

As I also have the honour of speaking immediately after the representative of Australia, I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to her country for its role in the presidency of the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Convention, and to congratulate her for a very successful and constructive meeting.

Let me turn now to the subject of my statement. Here, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Holy See, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden and my own country, Austria.

Over recent months we have witnessed growing interest in the issue of cluster munitions and cluster bombs, not only in the relevant United Nations disarmament bodies, but also throughout the whole world. We have serious concerns about the consequences of the inhumane use of cluster munitions. We are of the view that existing general rules of international humanitarian law have not been adequately applied in many instances in which these munitions have been used. Recent events have again shown that, in addition to the question of the reliability of such weapons, specific rules need to be established addressing their use during conflict situations, particularly in or close to concentrations of civilians. We believe such rules need to be established urgently.

During the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), held in September 2006 in Geneva, we expressed our conviction that negotiations should begin on a legally binding instrument that addresses the humanitarian concerns posed by cluster munitions. To make it clear, this is not a proposal for a total ban on cluster munitions.

It is for those reasons that we have made a proposal for a mandate to negotiate such an instrument; for ease of reference, a copy of the proposal is attached to the written version of this statement. We urge all States to support this proposal at the forthcoming CCW Review Conference to be held in November 2006 in Geneva.

Mr. Van Gucht (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time my delegation is taking the floor, I would like to begin, Madam, by congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee.

My delegation, of course, endorses the statement made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. However, I would like to provide some complementary information on Belgium's position on the question of cluster munitions weapons.

Legislation banning cluster munitions weapons entered into force in Belgium on 9 June. Certain types of weapons are, however, excluded from the legal definition of cluster munitions weapons, because they do not give rise to the same problems from the point of view of humanitarian law. I am referring in particular to weapons that cannot detonate on contact or as a result of the presence or proximity of an individual. In adopting that law, Belgian legislators showed that they realized the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of the use of cluster munitions weapons. And the fact that in places such as Lebanon Belgian soldiers are now clearing areas contaminated by explosive remnants of war, particularly cluster munitions, is an illustration of my country's commitment on the ground.

Having taken that national measure, Belgium is now logically pressing for multilateral negotiations to be undertaken as quickly as possible, with a view to a common response to the humanitarian concerns engendered by the use of cluster munitions. To that end, we would probably need to move forward step by step, while ensuring that the process is inclusive and guided by a clear and consensual vision of objective to be attained.

In that spirit, it is our view that the first step should be to renew the current mandate of the Group of Governmental Experts on explosive remnants of war beyond the next CCW Review Conference. We think that it would be advantageous to make the mandate more specific, to ensure that the discussion can focus on the priority theme of cluster munitions. The objective, through the continued work of the Group of Governmental Experts, is to create conditions for the broadest possible consensus in favour of measures that

would significantly improve the current situation. Belgium will participate enthusiastically and with determination in the negotiations that will be carried out in this framework.

Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania): I take this opportunity to speak on the subject of illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. My Government feels strongly that there is a need to address this issue effectively and urgently. While Lithuania does not produce weapons, we recognized early on that legitimate brokering activities require proper national legislation and institutional controls. However, these measures are not enough when even minimal global standards for brokering controls are absent.

Numerous illicit or undesirable arms transfers to festering conflict areas and human rights abusers have been facilitated by illicit brokering, thus fuelling violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. These middlemen organize arms transfers or services between two or more parties, often bringing together buyers, sellers, transporters and financiers to make a deal. Often such brokers do not reside in the country where the weapons originate; nor do they live in transit countries or in those for which the weapons are destined. It is difficult, to say the least, to trace, monitor or control them.

The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in 2001 at the United Nations Conference on Small Arms, has been vital in this regard. The Programme of Action specifically promotes the regulation of brokering activities to prevent illicit transfers without impeding legitimate brokering activities.

During the years since the adoption of the Programme of Action, a number of States, especially in Europe, have established national legislation on arms brokering. Many initiatives have been launched in regional and subregional forums. Regionally, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO's Operation Active Endeavor, the members of the Wassenaar Arrangement and the European Union have addressed this issue and have agreed to enforce strict controls on arms brokers and brokering activities by introducing and implementing adequate laws and regulations.

A great deal of progress has been made; however, shortcomings and loopholes remain. The formation of a Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eliminating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons provides a timely and welcome opportunity to discuss global measures on small arms brokering and elements for effective national controls. As a member of the Group, Lithuania believes that it should build on the valuable work that was done by the Group in 2001. The Group will also benefit from broad geographical representation, which will bring different experiences, perspectives and views on such issues as a definition of illicit brokering, brokering-related activities, the need for extraterritorial controls, linkages between the inadequacy of end-user certificates and illicit brokering, and transportation.

We hope the work of the Group will allow the United Nations membership to constructively engage on how to further develop national and international norms against illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Luaces (United States of America): Our delegation takes the floor this morning to address two conventional arms control issues: the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the issue of missiles in all its aspects.

First, however, our delegation wishes to commend the Security Council for its adoption on Saturday, 14 October, by a unanimous vote, of Council resolution 1718 (2006), which imposes sanctions against North Korea in response to its claimed nuclear test on 9 October. This resolution is legally binding on all United Nations Member States, in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

By enacting resolution 1718 (2006), the Security Council has sent an unambiguous message to North Korea that it must eliminate its nuclear weapons and nuclear programmes and halt its development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles. Resolution 1718 (2006) requires all Member States to prevent materials, resources and technology that could be used for weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and certain armaments listed in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms from going to or from North Korea. The resolution also freezes financial assets that support such activities, precludes travel by persons supporting such activities

and imposes other, related sanctions. Finally, resolution 1718 (2006) calls on Member States to take cooperative action to implement and enforce its terms, including, as necessary, through the inspection of cargo travelling to or from North Korea.

It is crucial that all States work together to take concrete action to implement Security Council resolution 1718 (2006) expeditiously. Only thus can Governments make clear to the leadership of North Korea that its provocative and destabilizing actions are unacceptable and that they will be countered.

Our delegation now would like to turn its attention to resolution 46/36 L, which established a multi-step process to put into operation a voluntary register of conventional arms transfers. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was intended to help prevent the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms, in order to promote stability and strengthen international peace and security, taking into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments. Member States were called upon to provide annually to the Secretary-General relevant data on imports and exports of conventional arms to be included in the Register. Member States were also invited to report on their military holdings and procurement through national production and relevant policies.

By any measure, the Register has been a resounding success, establishing an international norm of transparency and accountability in military matters and reinforcing civilian control of the military. During its 15 years of operation, annual participation in the Register has ranged from 85 to 126 States. More than 170 States have participated in the Register at least once, 142 States have participated three or more times, 101 States have participated at least seven times and 50 States have participated every year.

By reporting on both imports and exports, the seven categories under the Register have captured the vast majority of the international conventional arms trade. Even though some States may not participate in a given year, or may have never participated, the Register captures transfers involving many of those States. For 2004, the latest completed calendar year, the activities of 22 countries that did not participate that year, several of which have never participated in the Register, were captured in reports submitted by other countries. The United States continues to make it a strong objective to universalize annual participation in the Register.

Groups of governmental experts convened by the Secretary-General have conducted periodic reviews of the Register's operation and made recommendations on its further development in 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006. The first three concluded that the seven existing categories within the Register adequately covered the weapons of most concern to the international community. However, feedback received from a series of regional and subregional workshops held between 2001 and 2005 pushed the last two groups of governmental experts to make substantive changes to the Register. Those workshops revealed overwhelming support for increasing the utility of the Register by having it report transfers of small arms and light weapons as well. The 2003 Group of Governmental Experts responded by adding man-portable air defence systems, lowering the artillery threshold from 100 millimetres to 75 millimetres and opening the door to voluntary reporting of transfers of small arms and light weapons.

Under the direction of the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Argentine Republic, this year's Group of Governmental Experts opened the door further by agreeing to an optional standardized form for reporting transfers of small arms and light weapons and by recommending that States in a position to do so report such transfers to the Register. The Group of Governmental Experts also agreed to lower the reporting threshold for warships and submarines from 750 metric tons to 500 metric tons. Those substantive additions demonstrate the continuing vitality and relevance of the Register.

Secretary-General Annan summed up the role of the Register in his foreword to the report by this year's Group of Governmental Experts to the General Assembly as follows:

> "The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms plays a valuable role in the world's efforts to discourage the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms." (*A/61/261, Introduction, p. 5*)
>
> "At a time when the international community faces major challenges in pursuing disarmament and upholding the non-proliferation

regime, the positive outcome of the Group's deliberations is especially welcome." (*supra*)

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the United States support for the Register. We encourage all Governments, as applicable, to consider or to continue submitting annual reports to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as a global confidence-building measure in the field of conventional armaments.

With regard to the issue of missiles in all its aspects, the United States notes that the third Panel of Governmental Experts on the issue of missiles in all its aspects is to begin work in 2007. The two earlier Panels devoted extensive and valuable work to producing a report on that topic, and our delegation would not like to see their efforts wasted. Specifically, the second Panel produced a final draft report that represents near consensus. We believe that the work of the third Panel should be based on that nearly completed final report, rather than begin the process all over again, thereby repeating work that has already been conducted. Our delegation considers that, despite its obvious value as a resource for next year's Panel, the new report on missiles by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research is neither suited nor appropriate, for a variety of reasons, to serve as the basis on which the third Panel of Governmental experts on missiles in all its aspects should complete this work during 2007.

Mr. Kolesnik (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Republic of Belarus shares the concerns associated with the illicit arms trade. We support the efforts of the international community aimed at ending that trade. Belarus also favours the full implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspect. We reaffirmed our principled position in that regard at last July's Review Conference. Although, unfortunately, the Conference was unable to adopt a final document, we do not believe that to be grounds for inaction.

On the national level, the Government of Belarus is continuing to take steps towards the implementation of the Programme of Action. In particular, we have adopted a series of normative acts aimed at improving national laws governing export controls. We are currently working to improve the system for the gathering and analysis of information regarding the monitoring of transfers of small arms and light weapons. At the same time, working with other countries under the aegis of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), we have embarked upon the implementation of a major project to enhance the security of stockpiled small arms and light weapons and man-portable air defence systems. Belarus is open to cooperation with all countries. We express our gratitude for the efforts of all Member States, groups of States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO) to implement the Programme of Action.

As I have stated, the lack of a final document at the Review Conference should not impede the development of new measures aimed at combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Belarus favours the strengthening of brokering controls in the trade in small arms and light weapons. We also encourage the earliest possible conclusion of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts dealing with this matter. We believe the time has come to begin a substantive discussion, both in the context of the Programme of Action and of other forums, on the question of strengthening controls over the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State entities and groups.

It is also urgent that we develop and adopt an additional set of measures to counter the uncontrolled supply of man-portable air defence systems. We would also like to reaffirm our readiness to participate in discussions about initiatives associated with the lawful trade in small arms and light weapons with a view to curbing the illicit trade in weapons. We believe that the provisions of future agreements should not limit the right of Governments to self-defence and to engage in the legal trade in armaments. That must be based upon existing and agreed criteria and principles in the field of the control of conventional weapons. We believe that the creation, in practice, of universal and effective mechanisms for monitoring small arms and light weapons is possible, only if the views of all participating Member States are taken into account. The improvement of control mechanisms over armaments requires the support and development of confidence-building measures and transparency in this field.

In that context, we support the recommendations of the Group of Governmental Experts with regard to the development of the United Nations Register on

Conventional Weapons. The Republic of Belarus has regularly, since 1992, been submitting data to the United Nations Register and we intend to continue that practice in the future.

In recent years, considerable progress has been made in attaining the universalization of the Ottawa Convention on banning anti-personnel mines. This year, Belarus has begun the practical implementation of two projects on the elimination of stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. Under one project with NATO, by the end of 2006 we plan to terminate the use of ordinary mines. Under the second project, working with the European Commission, over the next two years, Belarus intends to destroy more than 3 million anti-personnel mines of the type PFM-1. We are convinced that, with the help of our partners, the projects will be concluded successfully.

The Republic of Belarus welcomes the conclusion to work on the translation into all of the official languages of the United Nations of Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and we express the hope that the process will make it easier for countries that have not yet acceded for that reason to be able to do so now.

At the national level, Belarus has already begun to consider the question of acceding to Protocol V to the Convention on Inhumane Weapons.

Mr. Moussotsi (Gabon) *(spoke in French)*: My delegation would like to take the floor today on the important item of conventional weapons in order to clearly restate its position on the outcome of the Review Conference on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in July 2001. My delegation would also like to reaffirm its commitment to the spirit and letter of the Programme of Action and all the initiatives to fight the scourge of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

The lack of a final document following the Review Conference of the Programme of Action should not constitute an excuse not to implement the Programme. For my country, the lack of an outcome document that would reward the hard work of the Conference does not take anything away from the relevance of the important dialogue that took place at the Review Conference for the Programme of Action. Nor does it question the vitality and competence of the Bureau of that Conference. This regrettable stage in our fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons should not signal the end of our fight to eradicate that scourge. Along with the continuation of those efforts we must continue to implement the Programme of Action and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted in 2005.

We are encouraged by the fact that since the adoption of the Programme of Action, many countries — namely those of the Economic Community of West African States and the Southern African Development Community — have begun implementation of the Programme of Action, by either imposing a moratorium or adopting legally binding instruments to fight small arms and light weapons. That commitment on the part of States — some of whom are affected by the scourge of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons — was not supported by sufficient financial assistance, which limited those implementation efforts.

As far as Gabon is concerned, we have strengthened our legal regime and have set up national mechanisms to fight the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We intend to continue those efforts in cooperation with other countries in the subregion of Central Africa.

We wish also to stress the need for follow-up to the implementation of the Programme of Action by holding biennial meetings of review conferences. The eradication of the destabilizing phenomenon of the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons is not only a security imperative, but a development imperative as well if we consider the tremendous harm done to the economic fabric by bloody conflicts exacerbated by small arms and light weapons. It is true that small arms and light weapons alone do not provoke armed conflicts, but without them the scope and duration of such conflicts would be diminished.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources and other sources of wealth, as well as the involvement of children in armed conflicts are also situations that stem from the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. For that reason, the fight against that illicit trafficking must, in our opinion, be accompanied by the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural

resources. Arms merchants must also avoid transfers of small arms and light weapons to conflict zones.

The fight against the acquisition and illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons must be carried out on a global level and there should be no weak link in the chain. That is especially true since no country can claim to be immune to the harmful effects of the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

We are, therefore, forced to step up our cooperation, in particular through the exchange of information and experience. The working group set up to discuss the adoption of a legally binding instrument on brokering must also begin its work and propose concrete measures to eliminate illegal brokering. My country is currently closely reviewing the proposal designed to develop a treaty on the standards that should guide and control the trade in small arms and light weapons.

The question of anti-personnel mines is also very disturbing to my delegation, owing to the untold suffering caused by those explosive devices to their victims. The presence of anti-personnel mines is also an obstacle to the socio-economic development of the countries affected, as they prevent the rural activities that provide the livelihood of a majority of the people in those areas in developing countries.

Gabon, as a party to the Ottawa Convention, would like to reaffirm its commitment to the five-year Nairobi Programme of Action adopted during the 2004 Review Conference, with a view to achieving a world that is free of anti-personnel mines.

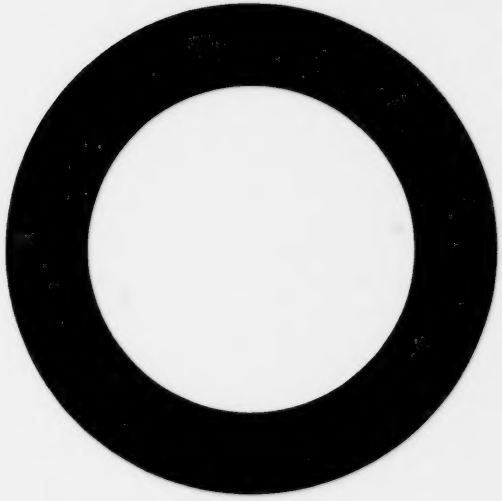
In conclusion, my delegation wishes to remind arms manufacturers that they have a moral duty and the responsibility to ensure that their weapons should end up in safe and responsible hands and that they should be used for security reasons and in the general interest of the populations of States acquiring them.

The Chairperson: We still have some delegations wishing to make statements on conventional weapons. Therefore, I will allow those remaining delegations to make their statements tomorrow. I will also give the opportunity to delegations to speak on today's thematic debate, on other disarmament measures and international security, before we begin our thematic discussion on regional disarmament and security.

We will also have an informal exchange with the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs and the three directors of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament.

We have been working very hard in recent weeks and I wish to give special thanks to our interpreters. They have done a very good job. I would also like very much to thank the sound engineers and the conference and documents officers for the tremendous work they are doing for our Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.



United Nations A/C.1/61/PV.15

General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

First Committee

15th meeting

Tuesday, 17 October 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairperson: Mrs. Juul ..... (Norway)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 82 to 97 (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on item subjects and introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairperson: This morning it is my intention first to have an informal exchange of views with Mr. Tanaka and the three directors of the regional disarmament centres. Afterwards, we shall continue with our thematic discussion.

I will now suspend the meeting in order to continue our discussion in an informal setting.

The meeting was suspended at 10.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

The Chairperson: Today the Committee will now continue with its thematic discussion on conventional weapons. We still have a long list of speakers remaining on this issue; therefore, I would kindly request delegations to keep their interventions as brief as possible.

Ms. Mourabit (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is taking the floor in the thematic discussion on conventional weapons to deal with the specific item of small arms and light weapons.

The excessive accumulation and illicit trade in small arms is threatening international peace and security and is compromising the economic and social development of victimized countries and plunging them into destitution and poverty.

In the struggle against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, we would like to highlight the adoption in 2005 of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Also of note was the fact that the May 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects concluded without identifying any new measures to combat this trend more effectively.

We should agree that if these arms represent a great threat for many countries, it is because of their illegal circulation. International action to identify and trace these weapons is a priority. The instrument adopted regarding the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, despite its legally non-binding nature, remains a good starting point and necessitates immediate implementation by States.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is further exacerbating transnational crime and armed conflict, thereby aggravating the insecure situation in the affected countries. It is compromising efforts to lay the foundations for a lasting peace, thwarting efforts at reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding, preventing the protection of the rights of peoples, perpetuating poverty and posing an obstacle to development.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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When we adopted the 2001 Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, we committed ourselves to undertaking the multilateral efforts required to effectively combat this scourge. In this context, the elaboration of adequate mechanisms would likely allow us to block illicit trading in small arms. Similarly, regional and subregional initiatives to mobilize resources and skills to combat illicit trading in small arms should also be considered.

In order to ensure a more effective effort in combating the illicit trade in small arms, it is important to continue the work we have begun. My country, Morocco, is in favour of concluding a legally binding instrument on arms brokering. An integrated and global approach with regard to this issue, which would emerge from an international consensus, would enable us to give this project all the necessary impetus to make our endeavour a major success.

Finally, my country cannot conclude without appealing to the international community to provide the necessary machinery for international cooperation to wage a global, efficient and effective fight against small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Bugallo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Spain would like to express its satisfaction at the statements made by the delegations of Costa Rica on behalf of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and by Mexico during this thematic debate on conventional weapons, and also with regard to the statements made pertaining to small arms and light weapons and to anti-personnel mines.

With regard to small arms and light weapons, Spain would like to congratulate the organizers and participants of the meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean region that was held in Antigua, Guatemala, the outcome of which was the adoption of the Antigua Declaration. We fully share the objectives and aspirations enshrined in that Declaration to strengthen the fight against the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and more specifically, the United Nations Programme of Action in that regard.

With respect to activities undertaken against landmines in the Central American region, the Spanish Government supports and welcomes efforts undertaken by SICA member States, by Mexico and by the Organization of American States (OAS) to meet the objectives for achieving a Central American region free of landmines, as well as to ensure that an American continent of the future can also be free of landmines. In this regard, Spain will continue to support these efforts, both on the bilateral level as well as through the voluntary trust fund established against landmines under the aegis of the OAS. In 2006, Spain has provided some $750,000 to the fund.

Ms. Hew-A-Kee (Suriname): Thank you, Madam Chairperson, for the opportunity to address this Committee on the important matter of conventional weapons under agenda item 90.

The proliferation of conventional weapons continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. In countries throughout the world, and particularly in Africa and the Caribbean region, the uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons continues to be the cause of conflict and organized crime, especially narco-trafficking.

In this regard permit me to note that small arms and light weapons, in particular, pose a threat to the national security infrastructure, impede social and economic development and can even be the cause of the destabilization of an entire region.

Suriname remains committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in 2001. We view the Programme of Action as an important tool at the disposal of the international community to address the issue of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption of a politically binding international instrument on the marking and tracing, in a timely and reliable manner, of small arms and light weapons marks yet another effort of the international community to eradicate this deadly trade.

We had high expectations that the recently concluded Review Conference would have been able to provide further guidance on fully implementing the 2001 Programme of Action. It is therefore regrettable that the Review Conference did not produce a meaningful outcome.

My delegation is of the considered view that international cooperation, including technical and financial assistance and capacity-building, is of critical importance in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We acknowledge that the primary responsibility lies with individual Member

States, but we are also convinced that national efforts should be complemented by international cooperation. In that context, we welcome all forms of cooperation and assistance at the subregional, regional and international levels.

Thus, more than ever before, there is an urgent need to regulate and reduce the trade in these weapons. Their impact, in terms of the toll in civilian deaths and victims, compels us to put effective measures in place.

In that respect, we are concerned about the uncontrolled sale and transfer of conventional weapons. It is essential that we have a multilateral framework — based on the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the Charter of the United Nations — to provide us with guarantees that these weapons do not end up in the wrong hands.

Every day, many people are killed by conventional weapons. The international community should step up to the plate and demonstrate the political will necessary to end the suffering caused to innocent civilians, especially women and children.

While we cannot compare our situation to the gravity of the existence of anti-personnel landmines in other countries, I am pleased to note that, with international assistance, Suriname was able to clear the anti-personnel landmines that were laid during its domestic conflict in the 1980s.

Implementing the Ottawa Convention is necessary in order to increase stability, peace and security throughout the world. Suriname reaffirms its commitment to the full implementation of the Ottawa Convention and continues to cooperate with the relevant regional and international organizations. My country supports the efforts to universalize the Ottawa Convention in order to achieve a mine-free world where people can live safe and secure lives.

We express the hope that the next biennial conference on the 2001 Programme of Action will provide new impetus for meaningful progress towards the goal of ridding the world of the deadly scourge of the illicit trafficking and transfer of conventional weapons. The adoption of the Programme of Action has spurred a wide range of initiatives at the national, regional and international levels. The international community should build on those achievements and create a much safer society in which people can work in peace and security to achieve the much needed goal of sustainable development.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I should like to begin my statement by welcoming the various reports presented to the Committee on behalf of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs — particularly the report just presented by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, the report by Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, in his capacity as President-designate of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, as well as the report presented by Mr. Roberto García Moritán, Chairman of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Indeed, despite the lack of the desired progress at the Review Conference on the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, as spelled out in the report and in the statements made by many delegations, we remain confident that the Committee will succeed in finding the way forward by drawing on lessons learned and banking on some of the positive outcomes achieved in the process.

Although my country is invariably concerned with the various disarmament issues pertaining to conventional weapons, canvassed in this thematic discussion of the Committee, I would rather dwell on an area of particular interest for Ethiopia: the issue of landmines. As a country that has been severely affected by the widespread havoc caused by the unexploded ordnance inherited from past external wars and internal conflicts — particularly in its northern and eastern parts — Ethiopia has been struggling to withstand the painful devastation caused by those deadly devices.

Thus, in view of the tremendous harm being inflicted on human lives as well as on development activities, particularly agriculture, the Government of Ethiopia has already designed an all-around national plan and established a responsible body at the federal level — the Ethiopian Mine Action Office — to deal effectively with the problem.

Thanks to concerted national action in that regard, a number of promising results have been

registered over the past few years alone, as shown by the following practical examples.

A national landmine impact survey, conducted in 2003 and 2004, indicated that more than 1.9 million people in the country are directly or indirectly affected by landmines.

Out of all the identified areas, some 2,226 hectares of land were cleared of unexploded mines between March 2002 and March 2006. During that clearing operation, 1,663 anti-personnel landmines and 23,901 unexploded anti-tank mines were safely removed and detonated. Seventy-six per cent of the total land area thus far cleared of mines has been put to use for economic and social development activities by local communities.

The rehabilitation of landmine survivors has been given paramount importance by the Government of Ethiopia, which is doing its level best to find a lasting solution for victims with the help of a number of concerned international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

To raise popular awareness about the issue of land mines, 216,263 inhabitants of three major regions have been given mine risk education since January 2003, and that task is being carried out on a sustainable basis. A strong sense of collaboration is also being nurtured among the local community in those affected areas, expediting the identification and clearing of unexploded ordnance.

Moreover, the process of setting up a national committee comprising all domestic stakeholders and assigning a national focal point for the effective implementation of the Ottawa Convention is currently well under way and is expected to be finalized within a short period of time. We are confident that, once that essential process is satisfactorily completed, Ethiopia will be in a still better position to fulfil all its obligations under the Treaty — including the submission of national reports on a regular basis — in the near future.

Here, it must be underscored that, as one of the 24 parties to the Ottawa Convention known to have a high number of mine victims and survivors, Ethiopia needs continued financial and technical assistance commensurate with the extent of the problem still to be tackled. Indeed, while the international community — particularly the developed countries and the concerned bodies of the United Nations — deserve thanks for the kind assistance that they have extended to Ethiopia so far, we remain confident that their cooperation will be intensified with a view to buttressing our effort at the national level.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Ethiopia's firm commitment to discharge all its treaty obligations and to uphold the United Nations resolutions hitherto adopted in the area of disarmament in general and with respect to conventional weapons in particular.

Mr. Andreasen (Denmark): In his statement at the 12th meeting, the representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, emphasized that the uncontrolled proliferation and wide misuse of small arms and light weapons are at the heart of the main security challenges of our time.

The delegation of Denmark fully associates itself with the cluster statement on conventional arms made by the presidency of the European Union. However, my delegation would have liked to stress that Denmark believes that armed conflicts are aggravated and prolonged due to unrestrained arms transfers, which led to insecurity, poverty and human rights violations.

We therefore strongly support the adoption of an international arms trade treaty to establish a common standard for global trade in conventional arms. Such an instrument should be legally binding and include all conventional weapons. Denmark encourages other Member States to support the draft resolution on an arms trade treaty (A/C.1/61/L.55), now under consideration, establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, thereby creating a formal mechanism to examine the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Madam Chairperson, first of all, I would like to congratulate you on the skilful manner in which you are guiding our work here in our Committee. I am also grateful to you for organizing this interactive debate, which is proving to be highly useful in that it allows for an in-depth exchange of views on the items included on the agenda of the First Committee.

Because of their devastating effects, small arms and light weapons are increasingly being compared to weapons of mass destruction. Every year, these

weapons cause the death or mutilation of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. They are responsible for the exacerbation and extension of armed conflicts and, to a large extent, they promote crime and terrorism, and put at risk efforts made towards recovery and development.

My country is located in Central Africa, a region that, for many years now, has been a source of concern for the international community due to the various conflicts that have taken place in this region. Therefore, Cameroon cannot remain indifferent to a debate that addresses small arms and light weapons. The numerous pockets of tension and armed conflict that have torn apart Central Africa in recent years have turned this region into a veritable powder keg. Due to the porosity of our borders, even countries that have not been directly affected by armed conflict, such as Cameroon, are, nevertheless, exposed to the harmful effects of these conflicts because of the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons. Armed attacks, which were infrequent in the past, have now become common. There is widespread banditry, in particular by means of roadblocks established in border regions. This is a serious threat that impacts our peoples' well being, jeopardizing efforts and investments made in support of development.

Hence, members of the Committee will understand that my Government attaches the greatest importance to this matter, and Cameroon is determined to make our contribution to the international efforts to combat the proliferation of and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. In this regard, Cameroon, alongside the United Kingdom and other countries, has pledged its commitment to an initiative in support of an arms trade treaty. My country is a sponsor of the draft resolution on this subject (A/C.1/61/L.55) and plans to participate actively in efforts to ensure that this laudable initiative becomes a reality. Clearly, an effective treaty on the arms trade, which would provide States the common international standards to guarantee a responsible arms trade, help reduce the proliferation and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, spare countless lives and ensure the creation of more conducive conditions for development and stability.

In order to put forward a collective and concerted front in dealing with the scourge of the proliferation of an illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, the countries of the subregion have launched a number of initiatives within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Thus, in 2003, we organized a seminar in Brazzaville on the implementation in Central Africa of the 2001 Programme of Action on the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, after which we adopted a programme of priority actions. Addressing the follow-up to the seminar during the meetings of the Committee, our ministers examined the implementation of this priority programme in their respective countries. They deplored the difficulties that continue to beset the efforts of their countries in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, in particular with regard to the porous nature of borders, which promotes the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. They also deplored the lack of appropriate detection equipment and of adequately trained personnel, as well as the lack of information and specific data as to the nature of and quantities of weapons in circulation.

During the twenty-fourth ministerial meeting of the Committee, which was held in Kigali from 25 to 29 September 2006, ministers of foreign affairs and of security of Central Africa expressed their deep concern with regard to the ongoing deterioration of the situation in Darfur and the threat it poses to the security and stability of countries of the subregion, in particular given the resulting increase in the flows of illicit weapons and the analogous resulting increase in the lack of security.

In order to explore the ways and means of dealing with this worrying situation, the ministers decided to hold a subregional conference in Yaoundé in 2007 on how to address cross-border security problems in Central Africa. This conference is the continuation of the high-level tripartite meeting on cross-border insecurity that was held in Yaoundé from 25 to 26 August 2005, under the aegis of the Governments of Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Chad, and in cooperation with the United Nations Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic.

The aim of this conference is to mobilize the international community, based on specific border security projects. The conference will focus chiefly on the problem of the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons crossing the porous borders of the countries of Central Africa and will provide an opportunity to examine the ways and means to put an

end to these problems, particularly by securing the transfers and stockpiling of weapons, by reinforcing border controls through the adoption of legislation and adequate regulation, and through the establishment of an effective system for cooperation between the security forces of the concerned countries, with a view to the eventual establishment of a cooperation mechanism for the management of questions relating to the lack of cross-border security.

The support of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations active in the field of small arms and light weapons will all be necessary in order to help organize these important meetings to be held under the aegis of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. Therefore, this is an opportunity to appeal for increased contributions to the Special Fund that was created to support the activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Like other countries, Cameroon was disappointed by the mixed results of the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Nevertheless, my country forcefully reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and welcomes the support that the Programme has been given within the international community. Undeniably, efforts undertaken in order to implement the Programme of Action must be pursued on the national, regional and international levels and the international community must mobilize itself to find solutions designed to resolve the pending questions of the 2001 Conference.

In this respect, my country welcomes the adoption in December 2005 of a political Instrument on the marking and tracing of light weapons. We believe that the Instrument is a further step in the right direction. Efforts in this area must be sustained, in particular to ensure that legally binding measures are adopted and to take into account the question of munitions, without which light weapons could not be deployable.

In a similar vein, we wish to voice our full support for the process for the adoption of an instrument on brokering. Cameroon believes that the international community must finally pay due attention to the matter of the illicit trade in man-portable air-defence systems. It is crucial that we adopt common international standards on the transfers of these types of weapons as soon as possible.

Mr. Basu (India): If the entire spectrum of weaponry that is the focus of disarmament and arms control measures was to be placed within a pyramid, it would have a three-tiered structure. Nuclear weapons, our foremost priority, would constitute the top of the pyramid, followed by chemical and biological weapons as the middle layer. But the broadest part of the pyramid would be made up of conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons. While it is vital to address the apex of the pyramid, its base constitutes a larger and more contingent concern, affecting directly a large mass of people afflicted by conventional conflict.

Unregulated and illicit trade in conventional weapons and small arms and light weapons are continuing to have devastating consequences. The direct effects include death, injury, trauma and the cost of caring for the wounded and disabled, not to mention the destruction of the civilian infrastructure. The indirect costs include displacement, destitution and prolonged underdevelopment. The proliferation of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons gravely endangers the security of States, disrupts their social harmony and hampers growth and development. The ready availability of illicit weapons fosters organized crime, drug trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources. It promotes sectarian violence, insurgency and terrorism.

India is therefore strongly committed to the full and effective implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. It augurs well that we now have an international instrument containing a vital commitment by States Members of the United Nations to mark all small arms and light weapons according to universal standards and to cooperate with one another in tracing illicit ones. We now hope for similar cooperative action in other related areas concerning small arms, including on brokering and the prohibition of transfer of weapons to non-State actors, including terrorists. We believe future biennial meetings of States would provide a welcome opportunity to take stock of

the extent of national implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. Thereafter, the General Assembly should consider further practical steps required to strengthen and promote its implementation.

India's approach to disarmament and international security is guided by a strong commitment to international humanitarian law, of which the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is one of the principal instruments. India is among those 20 States parties that adhere to the entire CCW package, namely, the Convention, amended article 1, and all five Protocols, including Amended Protocol II. We support the draft plan of action to be adopted at the forthcoming Review Conference, which stipulates seven action points for promoting the universality of the Convention.

India also favours strengthening the Convention through a compliance mechanism. In addition, we support the creation of a sponsorship programme to facilitate enhanced participation in CCW-related meetings by States parties affected by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Such a programme may also broaden awareness about the Convention and help to promote its universalization.

The CCW Review Conference next month will be a significant event. We are happy that Protocol V on ERW will enter into force on 12 November, coinciding with the Review Conference. This Protocol provides for post-conflict remedial measures of a generic nature in order to minimize the risks and effects of ERW. It includes generic preventive measures aimed at minimizing the occurrence of ERW and is intended to eradicate the threat that unexploded ordnance and abandoned explosive ordnance pose to the civilian population. India, which is among those 23 countries that have already ratified the Protocol, steered the work of the ERW Working Group for two years.

Our policy on land mines use is regulated by an abiding concern for protection of civilian life from the threats posed by irresponsible use of mines other than anti-personnel mines, including improvised explosive devices.

During the last four years of work carried out by the Group of Government Experts, India has contributed constructively to the process of finding common ground on a whole range of issues, including the technically complex issues of detectability and active life of mines other than anti-personnel mines. India has contributed constructively to the process of finding common ground on the whole range of issues. These include the technically complex issues of detectability and active life of mines other than anti-personnel mines. We have a forward-looking approach. We believe that, even on the contentious issues, a balanced approach could accommodate national security imperatives, humanitarian requirements, financial costs and technological constraints. We also believe that a future instrument on mines other than anti-personnel mines would supplement the existing instruments on anti-personnel mines in addressing humanitarian challenges in a more comprehensive manner.

India is conscious of the humanitarian risks resulting from the indiscriminate use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We therefore support the humanitarian objectives of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. At the same time, we recognize the limitation of the Convention in not addressing national security concerns of States with long land borders, where minefields at frontiers will continue to form an important component of defence in times of conflict. While our security requirements necessitate the use of anti-personnel mines, these are used in accordance with internationally acknowledged security norms and safety parameters. We are in favour of strengthened cooperation in mine clearance, including the unrestricted transfer of mine clearance technology, equipment and training; risk education; rehabilitation; victim assistance; and socio-economic betterment of mine-affected communities.

In the field of conventional disarmament, we believe that an enhanced level of transparency would contribute greatly to confidence-building and security among States. It would also help in the detection of arms transferred illegally. India has supported the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an important confidence-building measure and has submitted annual reports on the export and import of conventional arms. We note that the Register has evolved through the triennial reviews carried out by the Group of Governmental Experts. We are happy that at the latest review, in July 2006, the Group recommended that States that wished to do so could also report their transfer of small arms and light weapons to the Register on the basis of an optional standardized form. It also recommended a lower

reporting threshold for warships and submarines. These are welcome steps.

We shall continue to work towards steady progress in the areas of conventional disarmament, small arms and light weapons and the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) process. In particular, we hope to have a positive and forward-looking outcome at the CCW Review Conference, to be held in Geneva in November.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): In my intervention, I will touch on the subjects of conventional weapons, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and small arms and light weapons.

The preponderant focus on the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and now increasingly on small arms and light weapons, tends to divert the international community's attention from the regulation and reduction of conventional arms and armed forces. Conventional weapons and armaments are becoming something of a blind spot of the international community.

In his statement to the First Committee (see A/C.1/61/PV.2), the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs highlighted the threat from small arms and light weapons, landmines, sub-munitions and artillery rockets. Overemphasis on small arms can eclipse the salience of sophisticated conventional weapons and technology being traded in huge quantities around the globe. Trade in combat aircraft, aircraft carriers, airborne and early warning and control systems, missile defence systems, nuclear submarines and warships disrupts regional balances and escalates tensions. Such trade flourishes in a moral and legal vacuum.

In 1978, the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) characterized the global military expenditure as a "colossal waste of resources" (resolution S-10/2, para. 16) and called for reduction in such spending and for reinvestment of resources into efforts to fight poverty and improve the human condition.

In 2006, by comparison, global military expenditure exceeding $1.1 trillion is staggering. This is about 2.5 per cent of world gross domestic product, or $173 per capita. The United Nations, mandated to maintain international peace and security, has a budget which is less than 1.5 per cent of the world's military expenditure. The third-world countries are the favoured destination for arms sales. New markets are being explored, created and sought after. The total value of international arms transfer agreements during the period 2001 to 2004 was $131 billion. Developing countries accounted for 63.2 per cent of all international arms deliveries. Globalized arms production and sales ignore the grave humanitarian, political and strategic consequences of conventional weapons proliferation. Arms sellers encourage all sides in a conflict to buy more weapons. Some of them see conflict situations as a unique selling opportunity.

Recent studies have also shown that asymmetries in conventional armaments in conflict areas propel military spending and promote insecurity. It is therefore imperative that we pursue conventional arms control at the lowest possible levels of armaments and military forces, in order to promote regional and international peace and security. The preservation of a balance in the defence capabilities of States at the lowest levels of armaments should be the prime objective of conventional arms control. SSOD-I gave this clear direction: together with negotiations on nuclear disarmament measures, negotiations should be carried out on the balanced reduction of forces and of conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties, with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security.

We believe that conventional arms control needs to be pursued primarily in the regional and subregional contexts, since most threats to peace and security arise mainly in States located in the same region or subregion. In this regard, we can adapt and follow good practices. The value of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a cornerstone of European security, cannot be overemphasized. States with larger military capabilities have a special responsibility in promoting such agreements for regional security.

We must step up efforts to curb excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons, as well as their uncontrolled transfers. Conventional arms control must address the root causes of insecurity, emanating from disputes, conflicts and threat perceptions, and must seek to promote balance among regional States. We need to follow up such affirmations with concrete action. First, the Department for Disarmament Affairs can analyse the data on arms transfers and help States develop benchmarks for conventional arms control at the regional and subregional levels.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the standardized instrument, by themselves, will not lead to limitations in arms transfers. They should be used not only for reporting but also as a means to develop a global norm towards transparency in armaments. The data extrapolated from those instruments can serve as a significant early-warning mechanism, contributing to the prevention of conflict and to restraint in arms acquisitions. Secondly, the Conference on Disarmament can consider formulation of the principles that can serve as a framework for regional agreements on conventional arms control.

A stable balance of conventional forces is necessary to ensure strategic stability, particularly in regions riven by tension. Massive introduction of sophisticated weaponry accentuates conventional asymmetries and compels greater reliance on nuclear and missile deterrence in the regions that have such capabilities.

In South Asia, we are pursuing a strategic restraint regime, which has three constituents: conflict resolution, nuclear and missile restraint and conventional balance. Even as we sustain dialogue to address outstanding issues and work towards strategic stability and nuclear risk reduction, we will continue to strive for a conventional balance at the lowest possible level of armaments. In the interest of peace and security in South Asia, there must be restraint in both the demand for and the supply of conventional weapons.

We look forward to a successful outcome of the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, under the leadership of its President-designate, Ambassador François Rivasseau. Sufficient ground has been covered in the successive Preparatory Committee meetings. On compliance, we should be close to resolving the residual issues. Differences remain on anti-vehicle mines (AVM), in particular in the areas of detectability, active life, recording and removal of minefields and the categorization of fuses and sensors. We are of the view that the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its five Protocols adequately address humanitarian aspects of mines, including AVMs. But we look forward to working with the coordinator on AVMs, who has brought a fresh approach to the subject.

We thank Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, President of the first Review Conference on Small Arms and Light Weapons, for his untiring efforts. Notwithstanding the lack of progress in producing an outcome document, the Review Conference acted as a catalyst in highlighting the importance of the objectives of the United Nations Programme of Action. Member States remain committed to the full implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, regional and international levels. The adequate provision of financial and technical international assistance can help speed up the implementation of the Programme of Action by developing countries.

While Pakistan has the floor, The Honourable Rozina Tufail, member of Pakistan's National Assembly and its Parliamentary Secretary, will introduce the draft resolution on regional disarmament.

The Chairperson: I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.41.

Mrs. Tufail (Pakistan): I take the floor to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Regional disarmament", which is contained in document A/C.1/61/L.41. The draft resolution is being introduced on behalf of the delegations of Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Liberia, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Turkey, as well as my own delegation, Pakistan.

To ensure global security and disarmament, it is imperative to pursue efforts at both the international and regional levels. Regional measures, however, are the building blocks for international security. The requisite guidelines and recommendations for regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1993 provide direction and useful inputs to realize the objective of achieving disarmament at the regional

level. Those guidelines remain relevant in the present day for the promotion of regional disarmament in both conventional and non-conventional fields.

It is quite evident that, in most of the areas of tension and potential conflict — the Middle East, South Asia, North-East Asia and Central Asia — the regional approach could offer the most effective basis to promote disarmament and thus enhance security. The draft resolution that has been submitted notes the recent proposals for disarmament at the regional and subregional levels. It expresses the conviction that endeavours to promote regional disarmament enhance the security of all States. Those endeavours take into account the specific characteristics of each region and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest level of armaments.

In order to achieve those objectives, we need sustained efforts. The draft resolution stresses that point. It also affirms that regional approaches to disarmament complement each other; calls on States to conclude agreements wherever possible; welcomes the initiatives towards disarmament, non-proliferation and security undertaken by some countries at the regional and subregional levels; and supports and encourages confidence-building measures.

We believe that the adoption of this draft resolution should encourage countries concerned to step up endeavours aimed at regional disarmament. Its adoption should also help to strengthen regional and international security. The sponsors, including my delegation, hope that, as with a similar text last year, the draft resolution will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to make just a few remarks about small arms and light weapons, which are without any doubt the most destructive weapons in the world today. I would like to start from where my colleague at the helm of the Programme of Action review process, Ambassador Kariyawasam of Sri Lanka, concluded his statement at our 12th meeting, last Thursday. He said that it was time we heard the words of the Secretary-General: that those weapons may be small but they cause mass destruction. I share Ambassador Kariyawasam's view that time is running out and that we must commit ourselves once again to all possible efforts to stop the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons now. Some may ask, why now? Why the rush? What is the urgency? The answer is simple: thousands of innocent people are being killed or maimed every day and thousands more are starving to death or languishing in refugee camps. Virtually all these cases involve the illicit and uncontrolled circulation and use of small arms and light weapons.

Looking ahead, and following the Review Conference, it is imperative that we reassess our understanding of the humanitarian and human security implications of the problem. In that regard, my delegation hopes that next year the First Committee will hold a thematic debate, jointly with the Third Committee, on the humanitarian and human security aspects of illicit small arms and light weapons. Experts in the fields of humanitarian assistance, international humanitarian and human rights law and health would be invited to contribute to the special debate. It is important for us to acknowledge that the proliferation of these weapons is first and foremost a serious and urgent humanitarian and human security matter.

Secondly, we must reassess the global and international dimension of the problem and acknowledge the necessity of taking tough measures, especially at the international level under the aegis of the United Nations, to eradicate this scourge. Tough measures, including punitive measures, are advocated today to deal effectively with threats to international peace and security posed by nuclear weapons and weapons described as weapons of mass destruction. However, one cannot understand why there is still reluctance, or even resistance, on the part of some Member States to support tough legal measures at the international level to prevent, combat and eradicate the proliferation and use of illicit weapons — weapons that do not merely threaten peace and security but that incessantly cause mass destruction of human lives, particularly in Africa and other developing areas of the world.

Illicit activities that result in the massive destruction of innocent lives, such as those directly related to small arms and light weapons, cannot be addressed by declarations and administrative measures alone. That is why we in the West Africa subregion have gone beyond the Bamako Declaration of 2000 — on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa — and the code of conduct for the implementation of the Moratorium to conclude, earlier this year, a legally binding instrument on small arms

and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials.

We believe that illicit activities must be counteracted effectively by strong legal regimes, especially at the international level. We emphasize "at the international level" because we believe that there is still a tendency to underestimate the international nature of the problem, as well as the need for legally binding international instruments to complement national and regional efforts.

We in the West African subregion are delighted that, less than six months after the signing of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, a process is about to begin here in the First Committee towards a comprehensive legally binding international instrument for the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons. Once concluded, such an instrument should complement the ECOWAS and other existing regional and subregional regimes for responsible arms trade and transfer. My delegation is one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.55, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

My delegation is pleased that some of those who did not join the overwhelming majority of States in supporting a legally binding instrument on the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons have now indicated that they would support a legally binding instrument on the arms trade. We hope that others will soon follow, guided by the imperative that human security, or the protection of innocent lives, should be and should remain at the centre of all national, regional and global efforts for responsible arms trade and transfer.

Mr. Draganov (Bulgaria): As this it the first time I take the floor at this session, allow me to express my satisfaction at seeing you, Madam Chairperson, presiding over our proceedings. I am confident that your professional qualities and energetic personality will help the First Committee address the challenging issues before us in a meaningful way.

Bulgaria has already aligned itself with the statement on conventional weapons made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union (EU). I will therefore confine myself to just one point of particular relevance to my country. I am referring to draft resolution A/C.1/61/L.55, entitled "Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms".

Bulgaria is a sponsor of that initiative, which was launched by the delegation of the United Kingdom in collaboration with those of Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan and Kenya. Quite understandably, this undertaking is increasingly enjoying wider-ranging support from countries from the various regions of the world. It is in our common — and, may I say, global — interest to put in place an effective arms control treaty that would establish legally binding principles for trade in conventional weapons. Setting effective international standards in the field of the arms trade is essential to reinforce our commitment to deal with the human security and humanitarian concerns associated with the unchecked trade in arms. We believe that the gradual approach emerging from our deliberations can lead us to a vision of the scope and parameters of a possible treaty. Bulgaria supports the proposal to establish a group of governmental experts entrusted with the task of producing recommendations on the core elements of a future instrument.

Establishing common criteria for the export, import and transfer of conventional arms is largely dependant upon the ability and political will of countries to adopt robust national control measures and practices. Bulgaria has established a viable national export control system based on the principles and best practices applied within the framework of the United Nations, the EU and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The current Bulgarian legislation envisages licensing procedures for both exporting companies and brokers, as well as the issuance of a permit for each individual transaction, the provision of pre- and post-shipment assurances and verification — including end-user certificates by the competent authority of the recipient country — and a delivery verification certificate. Non-re-export assurances are also required to confirm that goods will not be resold or otherwise transferred to a third party. Strict sanctions are envisaged for possible violators, and arms-trade control instruments are constantly reviewed for possible improvement and amendment. International cooperation and the shared experience of our partners have been vital in achieving higher national standards in the control of the arms trade. That

is essentially how we see the importance of the initiative for an arms trade treaty.

Let me express the conviction of my delegation that this draft resolution is both timely and fully deserving of the approval of the Committee. Bulgaria stands ready to cooperate closely and to contribute to the process.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to reiterate its great appreciation for the clear-sightedness with which you, Madam Chairperson, have been guiding the Committee's work.

Our contribution to the thematic debate on conventional weapons will focus mainly on small arms and anti-personnel mines. However, I would first like to associate my delegation with the analysis given here a few moments ago by Ambassador Masood Khan of Pakistan regarding increases in military expenditures and the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons. My delegation underscores the intrinsic links between military expenditures on the one hand and development and the elimination of poverty throughout the world on the other. Humankind must devote fewer resources to weapons and more towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in order to eradicate extreme poverty, which takes a devastating toll on human dignity.

I shall now address the two basic points of my statement. Over the past five years, the international community has made great progress in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects clearly illustrated that fact. That was an especially positive undertaking that made it possible for States dedicated to the cause of halting the illicit trade in small arms to be better equipped to enhance the effectiveness of their efforts. In that regard, Benin calls for the strengthening of international cooperation in this area. We are committed to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which reflects a consistent, comprehensive approach that acknowledges the need to link the fight against the illicit trade in light weapons and ammunition with strategies aimed at conflict prevention and providing assistance for peacebuilding and development.

One of the areas in which the Review Conference faltered was in agreeing whether or not to continue the five-year review cycle of the implementation of the Programme of Action. The illicit trade in small arms continues, and we must continue to combat it. There is no doubt that the measures contained in the Programme of Action continue to be the appropriate response to combat this evil. Benin therefore does not understand why the United Nations cannot carry out another five-year review cycle to evaluate the implementation of the Programme of Action, benefiting from the lessons learned in the cycle just concluded. The United Nations is, and must remain, the forum for the inclusive multilateral cooperation called for by the seriousness of this scourge. The General Assembly should put the Programme of Action in perspective by adopting the principle of holding biennial meetings on its implementation, along with review conferences every five years.

The obligation of countries affected by the illicit trade in small arms to enhance their national legislation and their implementation measures requires effective support from the international community. This should include strengthened international norms in the areas of the export, import and transfer of small arms and in combating illicit brokering. To that end, it is essential to put in place universal, non-discriminatory, legally binding frameworks, to be implemented in the spirit of transparency we have been striving for in the area of conventional weapons.

It is for that reason that Benin has eagerly supported the initiative to begin an intergovernmental consultative process towards the adoption of an arms trade treaty. Benin is prepared to contribute to the implementation of the draft resolution to be adopted on that issue (A/C.1/61/L.55).

My delegation would like to recall that the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, which was adopted by the member States of the Economic Community of West African States, is a good point of reference that illustrates what can be done to make progress in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and their ammunition. We hope that the regional norms contained in the Convention will enjoy broader acceptance in the multilateral context, in particular in order to contribute to the international community's commitment to improve accountability on the part of

producing countries and to eliminate routes for the transfer of weapons from legal to illegal channels.

Similarly, we believe that measures to limit the supply of small arms should be augmented by targeted efforts to eradicate the factors that feed demand for small weapons. In that regard, States must have at their disposal the resources necessary to ensure the safety of individuals and goods on their countries' borders. Special attention should be paid to promoting a culture of peace and the rule of law and to ending youth unemployment. The international community must cooperate further to combat transborder organized crime, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the use force in the resolution of political disputes. It must also take further steps to protect vulnerable groups affected by armed violence, especially women but, above all, children, in armed conflict.

With regard to anti-personnel mines, we should encourage the efforts undertaken towards the complete elimination of this type of weapon from arsenals, in the context of Ottawa Convention. Benin has been part of the movement against the use of anti-personnel mines and in favour of their elimination. With French cooperation, a demining centre has been opened in the well-known coastal city of Ouidah, Benin. The centre is at the disposal of the international community for the training of deminers. It can also meet United Nations needs as regards the deployment of peacekeeping troops. Benin urges Member States prepared to contribute through concrete efforts to the implementation of the Ottawa Convention to lend their support to the work of the centre, whose mission is to contribute to reclaiming the vital areas held hostage by mines and to the reconstruction of countries emerging from conflict.

Benin also calls for substantial assistance for surviving victims of anti-personnel mines, so as to improve their ability to overcome the challenges associated with their condition. That of course entails alleviating both their physical handicaps and their emotional suffering. Their mutilation cries out for more humane responses in managing hostilities as well as, above all, for disarmament on behalf of the greater well-being of present and future generations.

Mr. Almaabri (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Madam, I have the great pleasure of conveying to you and to the other members of the Bureau our deep gratitude for giving me a further opportunity to address the First Committee. This is a very important body for the promotion and consolidation of the pillars of international peace and security, because it crafts multifaceted strategies, programmes of action and frameworks to address disarmament issues.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons throughout the Republic of Yemen is a complex and widespread phenomenon. We witness an interplay of cumulative historical factors at the root of the numerous armed conflicts that have gripped the entire country in the course of its modern history as a result of successive periods of political conflict. Moreover, Yemen's geographical location in the proximity of flashpoints of tension and areas of armed conflict in the Horn of Africa, its long coastline and rugged topography, and the specificities of its social fabric and culture — which consider the personal weapon a part of a man's personality — all contribute to facilitating the widespread availability of small arms and light weapons throughout the country.

Towards the end of the last century, following the attainment of meaningful political stability on the national stage, the Government of the Republic of Yemen recognized the danger posed by that scourge, as well as the importance of international efforts to combat it. As a result, Yemen participated in the first United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was convened in 2001. Our participation stemmed from our belief that a Programme of Action would provide an appropriate foundation for international efforts and cooperation to address this issue. At the same time, we recognized the importance of taking into account the scope, complexity and multidimensional nature of the problem in Yemen, which meant that the measures needed to address the issue exceeded the resources available at the national level. That makes it necessary to redouble international efforts to support national action in this regard.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen continues to make strenuous efforts to address the problem through a variety of measures and actions, foremost among which was the promulgation of laws and regulations to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that regard, the Government enacted law No. 40/1992, which provides the main framework to address the issue of weapons. The Government has submitted a new bill to the Yemeni parliament for discussion and adoption that would

address some loopholes in the existing law and would cover all facets of the issue. It is noteworthy in that regard that Yemeni law authorizes the State, and only the State, on the basis of its official powers, to import weapons to meet its basic needs for maintaining peace and security within the country. Individuals are prohibited from importing weapons of any type.

The Government has also closed all retail outlets for the sale of weapons and has implemented a programme aimed at collecting weapons from citizens through direct purchase or by encouraging the people to surrender such arms voluntarily. That programme is being carried out at a heavy financial cost to the State.

The security services concerned are conducting intensive inspection campaigns in all Yemeni cities aimed at seizing unlicensed weapons. The Government is also organizing workshops and training seminars for security personnel and customs officials in a bid to build capacity in the area of analysing and detecting weapons-smuggling activities, and is also training them in inspection and verification in order to prevent transborder smuggling.

The Government has developed an ambitious plan for the deployment of security forces that involves an increased police presence throughout the country and patrols along national inter-city road networks in order to prevent transfers of small arms and light weapons within the territory of the Republic.

The Government has established a national coast guard force entrusted with preventing international trafficking networks from smuggling arms using the Yemeni coastline or territorial waters as transit points for smuggling or for bringing new shipments into the territory of Yemen. However, tight control of our national coastline would require vast resources exceeding our national capacities. Achieving that objective would require greater support and cooperation on the part of the international community.

The development of the national coast guard force is still under way, but our efforts have already yielded results: we have detected two smuggling operations and broken two smuggling rings in Yemen's national territorial waters. The Security Council was advised of the details of those operations. The participants in those operations were seized and have been referred to our courts. The Government is in the process of conducting a study on establishing a border control department to consolidate efforts to combat that phenomenon across borders, including through serious and fruitful cooperation with neighbouring countries.

The Government is also working to ensure that studies and scientific research are carried out to examine the social dimensions of the phenomenon of the spread of weapons and to analyse the results, in order to understand its root causes, to use the findings in the context of a results-oriented approach and to raise the level of public awareness of the adverse impact of weapons on development and stability.

The Government is also encouraging, and working with, civil society organizations in order to address issues related to personal revenge. A high-level committee with subcommissions throughout the governorates has been established. In 2003 the Government hosted a regional conference on small arms and light weapons; it participates in all meetings and activities at the international and regional levels in that regard.

The Government has sought to reach a peaceful settlement through dialogue and negotiation on the question of international borders with neighbouring countries. It has done so on the basis of its conviction that such efforts would contribute to the strengthening of the foundations of regional peace and security and help defuse some of the tensions that had in the past given rise to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Government has concluded a number of security accords with sister countries and neighbouring States; their provisions cover issues related to cooperation and the exchange of information in the area of the combat against weapons smuggling and money-laundering.

The Government of the Republic of Yemen, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and a number of friendly States, has made great progress on mine clearance. Mine clearance has been completed in highly affected areas in a number of governorates, and numerous activities have been carried out in the areas of awareness-raising, technical surveys and support and help for mine victims and their reintegration into society. In addition, a high-level programme of action for mine clearance was adopted for the year 2006.

In closing, the Government of the Republic of Yemen, which has taken the aforementioned measures and made great efforts at the national level in order to eradicate this scourge, would like to reiterate its full

commitment to all international treaties, agreements and programmes of action relating to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Government calls for greater and more constructive cooperation and coordination at the regional and international levels so as to eliminate that scourge. Such efforts should not contravene the right of peoples under occupation to exercise their right to self-determination or their right to live in freedom, peace and security like other nations, or the right of States to legitimate self-defence in order to maintain their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to promote and consolidate the pillars of security, stability, peace and social harmony on the basis of the provisions of the relevant international instruments.

Organization of work

The Chairperson: Given the lateness of the hour, I propose to adjourn today's meeting. A few delegations still wish to make statements on the subject of conventional weapons, including delegations wishing to speak in the exercise of the right of reply. Those remaining delegations may therefore make their statements and introduce draft resolutions related to conventional weapons tomorrow, before we begin our thematic discussion on disarmament machinery. Delegations will also have the opportunity to speak on "Other disarmament measures and international security" and on "Regional disarmament and security", and to introduce draft resolutions under those clusters.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.